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THE LAST OF THE FAIRIES.

PARIS. — PRINTED BY E. BRIÈRE, RUE STE-ANNE, 55.

THE
LAST OF THE FAIRIES.

BY

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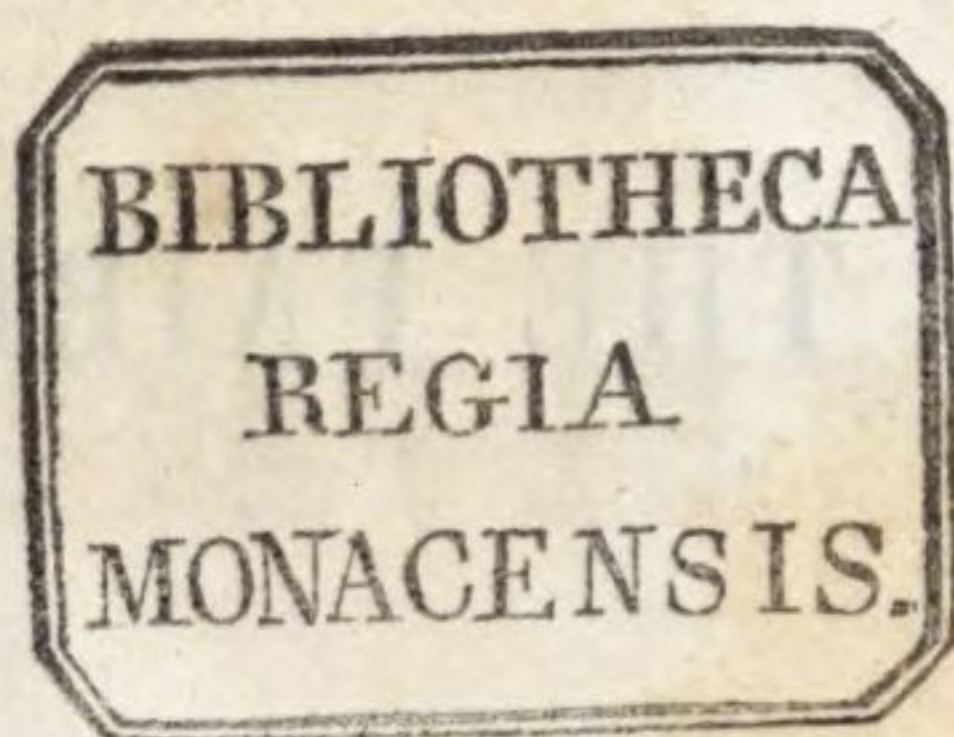
PARIS,

A. AND W. GALIGNANI AND C^o,

RUE VIVIENNE, 18.

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1848.

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MONACENSIS.

THE
LAST OF THE FAIRIES.

EPOCH THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

THERE was an old house near Worcester on the very highest part of the hill, which is not very high after all. It was not a gentleman's house, nor a farm-house, nor a cottage. Heaven knows what it had been in former years. It was nothing at all in A. D. 1651 but a moderate-sized brick building, lined with old wainscot, with broken windows and latchless doors, and one portion of it a great deal taller than the other.

There were eyes in the upper room of the

tallest part of the old house ; and to them was exposed an exceedingly beautiful scene, such as is rarely beheld, except in the vale of the Severn. Worcester, with its walls, and gates, and churches, and sunny fields, and pleasant places round ; and the wide valley studded with little knolls, and monticules covered with turf still green, and plumed with feathery trees. It was a pleasant and a cheerful sight,—a sort of fairy scene ; and indeed the rings left by the feet of the Good People, in their merry moonlight dances, attested their frequent revels in the meadows and under the trees.

But there were other objects besides those which Nature's hand had formed that gave additional cheerfulness to the scene. On both banks of the Severn, the eyes gazing from that high window could discern colours flaunting in the light wind, banners tossed about, and plumes, and gay dresses, and glittering arms ; so that in that part of the landscape, as a cloud or two passed over the sun, the effect was like that of rapid light and shade sweeping across a garden of flowers. And merry notes were there too : the fife, and the drum, and the clarion, rising up from below, softened and entendered by the air

and the distance. The bells of the cathedral chimed cheerfully, and altogether it was a pleasant scene to look upon, and these were merry sounds to hear.

About ten of the clock, a horseman, followed by two or three others, spurred up from the bank of the Severn, towards that house upon the hill. He came gaily along at a good quick canter, and his horse was a fine one, and well caparisoned. His bearing, too, was firm and soldier-like; but when one saw his face nearer, although he could not have counted more than five or six and thirty years, there seemed to be traces of many cares and anxieties upon his countenance, as well, perhaps, as a certain degree of constitutional melancholy, not to say gloom. It was a very grave face—very grave indeed, yet high and noble in expression, with a tall straight forehead, somewhat broader, perhaps, at the top of the temples than over the brow.

Some servants came round from the back of the house as he approached, and ran to hold his horse and his stirrup. He sprang lightly to the ground, and walked into the house, saying, “Take the basket from Matthews there behind

me, and bring it up. Take care that you don't break the wine-bottles, for there is but little to be had in Worcester. The Puritans have drunk it all up in a very godly manner ;" and, mounting the old stairs as he spoke, he ran rather than walked up to the higher chamber. There was an embrace for each of the two persons it contained—a lady of seven or eight and twenty years of age, still in her full loveliness, and a little girl of nine or ten, exceedingly beautiful, and very like her mother. Their faces were full of affection towards him who came ; but yet there could not be a greater contrast than between the expression of his countenance and theirs. Cheerful hope and glad expectation was upon the face of the girl and her mother, and melancholy thought upon his.

"Here is some breakfast for you, Lilla, dear," he said, "and for my little Kate too. I was resolved to come up for half an hour, and take it with you, for Heaven knows where our next meal may be."

"Will there be a battle to-day, father?" said the little girl ; "and will the King win? Oh! yes, I am sure the King will win."

"I trust he will," replied the soldier, "if there

is a battle, my Kate ; but of that I begin to doubt, for the Roundheads have a long march before them, and cannot get here very early."

"Then we had better come back into the town," said the lady, looking to her husband inquiringly, while two of the servants laid a napkin in one of the broad open window-seats, for table there was none. "I should not like Cromwell's people to cut us off."

"No, my Lilla," answered her husband, "you must not come into the town again. There is much confusion there ; and as soon as the enemy appear, you had better retire with the servants to Pershore, where you will have speedy tidings of what follows. If we have to stand a siege, or repel an assault, it would be a pain and a burden to me to have all I love pent up within those old and crumbling walls."

There was a look of remonstrance came upon the lady's face, but her husband interrupted her with a smile, saying, "Come—to breakfast ! to breakfast ! for I must soon get back. What, not a chair to sit down upon ! Well, we must make the best of our campaigning ;" and standing by the side of the window-seat, he proceeded to distribute the homely breakfast he had brought

up from Worcester; ate a small portion, but not much, himself; and gazed with a look of thoughtful delight upon his innocent child, as she seemed to partake of the meal with double zest, from the rude and hasty way in which it was served.

Perhaps five minutes had elapsed while they were thus employed, when a quick light foot was heard coming up the stairs, and a lad some seventeen or eighteen years of age, richly dressed and accoutred, with his long dark hair flowing down over his laced collar to his shoulders, entered the room in haste, exclaiming, “Lord Eustace!—My lord! Cromwell is in sight—Hark! you can hear his trumpets!”

The gentleman he addressed instantly started to the window and looked out, while his young visitor, with a slight affectation of manhood, patted the little girl upon the head, saying, “Ah! my darling Kate, drinking wine at ten in the morning. That’s to make you a fit wife for a dashing Cavalier. I hope your ladyship is well this morning. You will soon see some warm work down below; but I trust before night we shall have one-half of the Roundheads in the Severn, and the rest in the gaol.”

A slight cloud came over the lady’s face, and

she was answering, with a sigh, "I trust so," when her husband turned round from the window, saying, "I must to horse, dear ones. Remember, you must ride to Pershore, as soon as you have seen them upon the ground. Come, Denzil, we must away."

"Do you see them, Charles,—do you see them?" asked the lady, clinging to his arm.

"Not their whole force," replied her husband; "those trees there hide them; but I caught a glance of steel caps through the brake; and if you listen for a moment you will hear.—There! there!"

The distant sounds of a trumpet rose upon the air; and with one brief embrace he tore himself away,—ran down the stairs followed by his young friend,—mounted his horse, and galloped back to Worcester.

The lady's eyes were full of tears when she gazed forth from the window; first marking the course of her husband towards the town, and then turning an anxious look over the distant wooded landscape, where the forces of the Parliament were advancing towards the fatal field of Worcester. In a few minutes she beheld a dark moving mass—with catches of light

here and there upon breast-plate or steel cap—come forth from behind one clump of trees, and disappear again behind a little wood. Another and another body passed, foot and horse in very equal numbers; but regiment after regiment, troop after troop, till the lady's heart sank at the conviction of the great superiority of their numbers; and her eyes turned to the royal army below.

A good deal of bustle was then observable; and, by the aid of fancy, she thought she could discover her husband, and the King, and Leslie, and Middleton, and Hamilton, and Derby.

Long and anxious was her watch, till passing in and out, now seen, now lost as before, the army of the Commonwealth—growing more and more distinct in all its parts as it advanced—swept on—halted for a moment—marched forward again, and assumed its position as if for battle, taking possession of the slope of the very hill on which she stood, and interposing between herself and the town.

Her heart sank a little, and she gazed down upon her child; but then a look of high resolution came into her face, and, putting her arm

round the fair delicate form of the little girl, she said, "We will see it out, Kate; we will see it out."

"Oh! yes, mother, let us see it out," answered the child; "do not let us run away while my father is fighting."

"Never," answered the lady; and there they stood, while the servants gathered themselves together at another window, and gazed forth likewise.

All seemed tranquil for about half an hour. An occasional horseman galloped along the line, trumpets sounded from time to time, a slight movement took place amongst the infantry, some stragglers were seen moving about upon the rear of the Parliamentary army, and a stout heavy man, with ten or twelve other horsemen following him, moved slowly for a little distance up the hill. Then halting, he gazed over the plain, and over the town, for a moment or two, spoke a few words to one of those near him, and instantly a horseman dashed away, taking his course towards the left. A large body of cavalry detached itself at once, and rode along the bank of the river, a fire of musketry began from the centre of the line, and a cloud of

smoke spread over the scene. It interrupted the sight sadly, but the lady saw several large squadrons of horse put into a charge, and they whirled down like a bolt from a cross-bow against the Royalist troops on the nearest side of the river.

From that moment all was confusion, to eyes unaccustomed to seek out and judge the events of a field of battle. Large bodies of men riding fast were seen through the clouds of sulphurous vapour; the flashes of the musketry, the gleam of waving swords, and the slow movements of some bands of pikemen, were caught indistinctly from time to time; but all that the lady and her child could gather as to the result of these movements was, that the Parliamentary army was pressing down steadily and strongly upon Worcester, and that the waves of battle rolled nearer and nearer to the town.

It was a sight that made her heart sink, and her eye ran along the course of the river, towards a spot where she knew that a large body of the Royalist cavalry had been posted. She saw them there all firm and in array upon the opposite bank, but a little further on she saw—what they could not see, on account of a thick

copse and a wooded hill which screened the operations of the enemy—two regiments of Parliamentary horse galloping rapidly towards a ford, where the stream took a sharp turn. She clasped her hands together, and pressed them tight. What would she have given at that moment for wings to fly and bear her friends intelligence of the manœuvre she had detected and understood right well. But it was all in vain. The enemy reached the ford, dashed in, gained the meadows on the other side, re-formed, and taking ground a little to the left, became suddenly apparent to the King's cavalry.

An instant movement was observable amongst the latter; two gentlemen drew out a little way from the rest, gazed at the squadrons which had so suddenly appeared, and rode to the opposite extremes of their own line. A slight change of disposition immediately followed. The right of the Royalists was somewhat extended, the left was brought a little forward at a slow pace, and then there came a temporary pause. The sound of trumpets was heard the moment after; and both parties dashed forward against each other with furious speed. They met in full career, while a fierce and wild hurrah rose up into the

air, and reached the lady's ears as she gazed upon the struggling mass, now all mingled and confused. Her hands pressed tighter and tighter together as she saw masterless horses break away from the line and gallop across the plain, and knew that some one, as loved and dear to others as he whom she loved best was to herself, had fallen beneath the chargers' feet in the midst of that fierce conflict.

"They give way, mother, they give way," cried the little girl, touching the lady's arm; "the Roundheads are routed—See, they fly, they fly!"

It was true. The temporary success of Middleton and the Duke of Hamilton for an instant promised to change the fate of the day. Cromwell's cavalry did give way, the Royalists pursued fiercely, and drove them back fighting, almost to the very ford. But at that moment a small group was seen to separate itself from the rear of the King's soldiers, and the lady could distinguish two or three troopers supporting a gentleman upon his horse. "That looks like the Duke," she murmured; "No, it must be Middleton."

Another group detached itself, but these were

on foot—dismounted soldiers bearing a dead or wounded man in their arms. Then the uncertain tide of battle turned. The Parliamentary forces rallied, charged again, the Royalists were beaten back over the ground they had just traversed, broken, scattered, and flying hither and thither in parties of ten and twelve.

The lady clasped the child's hand in her own—tight, very tight; and the little girl wept. They turned their eyes to the part of the field immediately below them. A terrible change had come over the scene. The Royalist forces were not to be discovered—unless, indeed, the fragments might be distinguished in those small bodies of horse that were seen galloping away over the distant fields. The troops of the Parliament were at the gates of Worcester.

“Pardon, my lady, but it is time for you to go,” said an old servant, approaching from the other window; “the day is lost. You had better betake yourself to Pershore, as my lord directed. The horses are all ready.”

The lady raised her eyes to heaven for an instant, and seemed to ask strength from above. “No,” she said at length, “we will hide in the wood, Isaac. I will not quit this ground till I

know his fate. Come, Kate, we may help your dear father yet. God give us courage and success!"

CHAPTER II.

It was night—dark night. There were stars out, but no moon, and across many parts of the sky long lines of dull grey clouds were drawn, hiding the twinklers of the heavens. The clocks of Worcester had struck nine, and the dull vibration of the great bell was sounding, as if with pulses, through the heavy feverish air. The scene around the city lay wrapt up in shadows, while the fugitives sped far away from the field of their defeat, and the pursuers with hot spur hurried after. The dead in their last rest lay in the meadows round—three thousand as gallant gentlemen as ever drew a sword. The wounded untended shared the couch of the dead, and lost part of their own sufferings in the sense of their royal master's disaster. Here and there was a light upon the field, sometimes seen wandering about, sometimes stationary; and the low creaking of rude cart-wheels could be heard seeking for the less dangerously wounded, or for those

prisoners who had not yet been taken into the town of Worcester.

Near a low wood, broken and irregular in its external form, stood two or three Parliamentary musketeers, with a group of some seven or eight prisoners, disarmed and tied. A torch was stuck into a hole in the ground, casting its red unwholesome glare around, over the rough stern features of Cromwell's soldiers, and the sad countenances of the captives, and the green branches of the trees, and the turf dabbled with blood, and the corpses of five or six gallant companions fallen ; for the spot was one where a fierce and last effort at resistance had been made.

The armed soldiers were standing, resting on their guns ; the captives were generally seated, though some who had received wounds were stretched out upon the grass. Few of them spoke, but one man, a Scotchman, in the garb of a Royalist foot-soldier, who was upon his feet, nearest to the musketeers, seemed anxious to ascertain the fate reserved for them. He had put several questions without receiving an answer ; but, at length, one of the men, seemingly irritated by his pertinacity, replied in a loud harsh tone, " If you want to know what is to become of you, Scot,

I will tell you, though methinks you would learn soon enough ; you are to be sold for slaves into the plantations."

The poor Scotchman hung his head, and sat down dejected by his fellows. At the same moment a heavy cart came grating along towards them, and one of the soldiers said, " Come, get up, get up ; here is your conveyance."

The cart had not yet indeed become visible, but the next instant the faint outline thereof was descried wending slowly forward, and there seemed two or three people with it. The soldiers, as they looked forward, thought they perceived a woman's garments, and, in about a minute after, they saw a child also.

That sight was seen by another likewise, and it told to a heart oppressed with grief and despair the sweet consoling tale of love and devotion true to the last. He raised himself a little from the grass, and the light of the torch fell more strongly than before upon his fine form and noble countenance. The expression was still the same, and any close observer could not have doubted that there was a man of noble lineage, and of gentle breeding, although his gay and plumed hat was cast away, and the coat that he

now wore was that of a common foot-soldier.

Slowly the cart rolled on, but when it came nigh, though the child still appeared, young, and fair, and graceful, the woman's form was no longer seen. It seemed to have dissolved into thin air, or as if the darkness had swallowed it up, even as she came forward. So suddenly and completely did it disappear, that one of the soldiers took two or three steps forward to meet the cart, bending his eyes fixedly upon the obscurity before him; and when he reached the little group walking together at the horse's head, he demanded, sharply, "Was there not a woman with you?"

"No," replied the carter, "there has been no woman here, unless you call this babe a woman."

"And what does she want here?" demanded the stern voice of the soldier; "this is no place for children, or women either."

"I am seeking my father, sir," said the sweet low voice of the little girl. "I am sure you will help me to find my father."

The soldier gazed at her for an instant, as the light of the torch, somewhat softened by the distance, fell upon her fair countenance and her

rich dress; and he shook his head with a look not altogether unfeeling, replying, "Ah, poor child! your father is not here; we have none of your gay gallants amongst us; your ruffling Cavaliers and dashing lords have all been taken into the town; we have got none but the poor foot-soldiers, who have been led like sheep to the slaughter by those who should know better."

"But I am sure he is here, living or dead," said the little girl in reply; "one of our servants saw him here just after the battle, and he told me where to find him; pray let me look for him by the light of the torch;" and she clasped her fair small hands together with the gesture of earnest entreaty.

"I am here, my child, I am here, my Kate," cried a voice; for, although it was ruin to all his plans, the captive could resist no longer; and the child darted forward unopposed, for the soldiers had not the heart to restrain her under the impulse of filial affection.

The poor captive tried to rise from the ground to press her to his heart as she sprang towards him; but his hands were tied, and before he could effect that purpose, the child had cast

herself upon his bosom with one arm round his neck, covering his face with kisses.

The stern soldiers looked on much moved; but the captive was surprised to find that while with her left arm she clung closely to him, the right sought out the bonds upon his hands, and something cold, like steel, glided down his wrist. The next instant the cord was severed, and his hands were free; and the child's mouth, pressed close to his ear, whispered, low but clear, "There's a horse at the corner of the wood. Mount, father, and away!"

His brain seemed to turn giddy for a moment, and the pulsations of his heart to stop. But the child unclasped her arm from his neck, and whispered once more, "Away!"

It was the only chance for safety. The concealment he had hoped for was no longer possible. The bloody axe which had struck so many of his noble friends was the only fate before him; and, springing suddenly on his feet, he darted away into the gloom.

As his tall figure disappeared, however, the stern soldiers, with a fierce cry of indignation, raised their muskets to their shoulders, and fired in the direction he had taken. A shrill scream

burst from the darkness, at the very same instant that the sound of a horse's hoofs at the full gallop reached the spot where they stood.

“He is down, he is down !” cried some of the men, rushing forward, whilst two of their comrades remained with the prisoners. But they found no one, though they searched diligently around ; and still the quick beating of the horse's hoofs was heard, growing fainter and fainter in the distance. When they returned to the spot where the captives were, they found the child lying prone upon the ground, pale as monumental marble ; nor did she recover from the swoon into which she had fallen, till the prisoners had been all placed in the cart, and the party were about to proceed upon their way. The soldiers threatened and reproached, but they had not the heart to hurt her ; and one of them, who was a father himself, took her by the hand, and led her into Worcester. He said he must take her before the Lord General, but she besought and prayed him to let her seek shelter in the house of an old servant, and when he left her at the door, he said to himself, “If I should be ever in such a case, may my child do as she has done.”

EPOCH THE SECOND.

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CHAPTER III.  
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“How the hours fleet away! Be they dull and heavy-footed, overburdened with sorrow — be they winged with joy and mirth — be they even-paced and tranquil in the path of life, still they go, they go; and, when they are gone, they diminish into a mere speck. Nine years have passed away, and it seems but a span; and yet if I come to think, my hair, which is now white, was then just turning grey, and my eyes, that are dim now, were as clear as an eagle’s.—But come out of the way, lad, come out of the way. There’s a stranger riding down the hill, and I have not liked the sight of a stranger for many a long year.”

Such were the words of an old man, dressed in a black coat, with a broad-ended handkerchief round his neck, and bearing a respectable and even reverend appearance, to a good-looking country youth of two or three and twenty years of age, as they stood together upon the green sward beneath an old castle wall.



Many a strong fortified house had been besieged and ruined by the cannon of one or the other of the contending parties in the great civil war, but the dilapidation of this building dated from a period long anterior, and the ivy had grown thickly over even the fragments which had fallen from the walls, marking that centuries had passed. Yet these walls were very thick and strong, and one could not suppose, to look upon them, that the hand of time alone had broken them as they now appeared. It was evident, in short, that some of man's desolating devices had overthrown the place of strength before its time -- when, I know not -- perhaps during the contentions of York and Lancaster; but however, there it stood, a ruin. The most perfect part of the building was the old gateway, with its two tall machicolated towers, and guard-room over the arch; but yet the guard-room and towers were both unroofed, and the wind whistled through the empty window-frames -- the voice of desolation calling to the dead.

From either side of this gateway stretched forth walls, with other towers, surrounding perhaps an acre and a half of ground; and the court within showed many a fragment of feudal time



in the crumbling masonry of the late keep, and the broken tracery of the chapel windows. A seedling ash tree had planted itself here and there amongst the ruins, and three tall elms in a group stretched their wide branches over the well in the castle court. That well had once been covered by an arch of richly wrought stone-work ; but some forty years before the period of which I speak, the mortar having fallen out, and some of the stones dropped into the water, which was the finest, the clearest, and the best in the whole neighbourhood, the inhabitants of the adjacent village, who loved the well with a degree of almost superstitious affection, cleared away the ruined fragments from around it, and left it nearly as nature had formed it, with no covering but the branches of the three elms of which I have spoken.

The castle well was in fact a spring of very beautiful water, which issued bountifully from the turf in the castle court. Old hands long gone had dug a little reservoir for the waters of this spring about three feet deep, and of the same width, with a length of about four feet—it might be five, but I never measured it. The sides of this reservoir were lined with flat stones to prevent the



earth from falling in ; and a semi-circular piece, cut out of the slab at the west side, suffered the superfluous water to flow away into a little conduit underneath the castle wall, and so over the side of the hill down to the stream in the valley. From the distance of more than a mile, people would come to fill the pitcher at this well ; and, indeed, so limpid was the water, that although at most times the smooth surface reflected the leaves and branches of the trees above, yet through these transparent coloured images one could see the little pebbles at the bottom as distinctly as if no medium but thin air had been interposed : indeed, it only seemed to render them brighter, as if encasing them in polished crystal. All around, the turf was short and thick ; and the elms and the well they shaded were so placed as to be clearly seen through the archway of the great gates, by any one who was standing on the castle green in front.

I have been obliged to dwell upon these facts particularly ; for the reader must remark and remember them as necessary to the due understanding of this tale. It may be also as well to point out that the castle stood alone, on what may be called the step of a hill, occupying a position



about half way up the ascent, which was long but not steep. This step was a flat piece of some twenty or thirty acres ; and upon it, at the distance of three or four hundred yards from the old castle, were built several neat cottages. Below them again, on both sides of the road, which, after crossing the castle green in its descent, wound gently down to the bottom of the valley, appeared the village, following all the sinuosities of the path, and so closely embowered in trees, that from the old gates nothing could be perceived but a roof or a chimney here and there, and the tower of the church rising up from below.

It was as pretty a rural scene, indeed, as ever the eye fell upon ; and, whether in sunshine or in shade, under the blue sky or the cloud, there was something of homely peace and tranquillity about it which had a tendency to soothe the mind of the beholder, and call up images of a calmer and a happier kind, than the heart was ordinarily conversant with in those days of strife and faction.

The village had fared well, too, in many respects. At some distance from any of the channels through which the tide of war had flowed, few of those pertinacious heat-burnings had been



engendered in it which had sprung up in most parts of England, from the struggle of parties in the civil war. The old clergyman of the place, it is true, had been dispossessed, and a Presbyterian minister occupied his place; but good Doctor Aldover was a very meek, peaceful, and timid man, and he had made no struggle to retain what the powers that were thought fit to take away from him, having been scared almost out of his senses by being apprehended as a malignant, while on a visit to a neighbouring town, and examined by a party of Parliamentary Commissioners. He promised them on that occasion, with all the sincerity of terror, to conform as much as in him lay to their good will and pleasure, and consequently resigned his benefice, without a word, at the very first summons. He had studied medicine early, as a means of benefitting his parishioners; and now, as was frequently the case with dispossessed clergymen in those days, he studied the healing art more deeply, for the purpose of maintaining himself. He acquired skill and reputation too, and, at the time I speak of, was the only physician or surgeon in the place. It cannot be said, that, though he bore his fate so meekly, he looked at his Presby-



terian rival at first with any great affection ; but it so happened that the minister, though somewhat starch and caustic in his manner, was a good man and a kind, at heart ; and when he discovered all the high qualities of his predecessor, he felt half inclined to be sorry that he had been the means of depriving him of his cure. He made sundry attempts to win the friendship of good old Doctor Aldover, which, though shyly viewed at first, were rendered successful in the end by various accidental circumstances which tended to bring them together ; and now they would not unfrequently sit in the parlour of the one or the other, drinking a moderate glass of good ale, and conversing learnedly of this or of that, sometimes with much simple shrewdness, when the topic was one with which their studies had rendered them familiar, and sometimes very nonsensically, when they ventured upon ground of which they had no experience.

Such was the state of the village on the day I speak of.

I know not whether the poet intended it as the most perfect picture of human felicity when he described a man as “the world forgetting, by the world forgot,” but certainly, dear Reader,



such is to many men, and to all men under certain circumstances, a very blissful mode or condition of life. We all know that in this great world that we inhabit, there are a great number of jealousies, fears, animosities, hatreds, strifes, confusions, riots, massacres, crimes,—that men in the world pick each other's pockets of their purses, their snuff-boxes, their handkerchiefs, their reputation, their honour, their peace ; and we all know, moreover, that there are certain times—stormy times in the world, party times—when the winds of faction blow high, and the clouds of rancour gather over the state, and men see in the fanciful vapours strange images of patriotism and freedom, and devotion, and renown, which after all turn out shapes formed of mist, that change with every puff of prevailing gale ; we all know, I say, that there are such times, and that then the devil is exceedingly busy in stirring up the confused caldron of human passions, and bringing hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness to the surface.

Surely, at such epochs as these, a man may well wish to live, “ the world forgetting, by the world forgot.” But it is not very often that he can find such a state in its completeness as



might have been done at the time I speak of, in the village that I have mentioned. The Presbyterian minister was at the height of his ambition. There was nothing more for him to have or to desire. He had dispossessed an Episcopalian of his church and benefice, he had sat himself down amongst a knot of his co-religionists, to whom he could hold forth continually upon predestination, and election, and free grace. He met with no opposition and very little dissent from his doctrines, and he did not at all want to be disturbed in the exercise of functions which worked so easily by Baptists, Anabaptists, Independents, or Fifth Monarchy men.

Doctor Aldover had still greater objections to any interruptions of the quietude of the place; and he it was, to say the truth, who, standing before the castle gate, with a youth, the son of one of his patients, was struck with so much terror at the sight of a stranger, and hurried away so precipitately towards his own house in the village.

In the meantime, the horseman, whom he had perceived coming down the hill, descended slowly; and it would appear that his quiet pace was the effect, more of curiosity in regard to



the country, than of apprehension for his horse's knees, for he stopped altogether more than once, and seemed to gaze over the surrounding scene. He took no notice whatsoever of the two who turned away at his approach ; and, at length, he reached the step in the hill which I have described, and drew in his rein before the castle gates. Whether it was the beauty of the scene that attracted him, or some personal interest in the spot, I cannot tell ; but, after looking round him for a moment, he dismounted, threw the heavy stirrups across the saddle, and leading his horse under the shadow of the old walls at the northern angle, where the grass was luxuriant but somewhat rank, he left him to feed, as if there was a perfect understanding between man and beast, as to their pilgrimage together through this world. Then, coming round to the western side himself, on which the declining sun was beginning to shine, he seated himself in the shadow of the arch-way, crossed his arms upon his chest, and fell into a fit of meditation.

Now, whether meditation always ends in a conviction of its own inutility, and men, before it has gone on long, come to the conclusion of one of the best of our mocking-bird poets, that



“Thinking is nothing but a waste of thought,  
And nought is everything, and everything is nought :”

or whether there be something of a retro-active mesmerism in the very operation of thinking, which sends the thinker asleep, as potently as the communication of his thoughts sometimes sends others ; certain it is that reveries, especially after a long ride, are very apt—at least, it is so with myself—to end in a nap. The traveller, if one might judge by his dress, which was very dusty, had come that day somewhat more than a good morning’s march ; and his meditations, after having continued profoundly for about five minutes, concluded in the abandonment of all meditations. His eyes closed, his head leaned back against the angle of the masonry, and his hat pressed off formed an indifferent pillow, while his dark brown hair, escaping from beneath, refuted without words the famous tract upon “The unloveliness of Lovelocks.”

In short, he was a very handsome young man, of some seven or eight and twenty ; and the bright glossy curls of his long abundant hair suited his face much better than the short crop



of the Parliamentary soldier, or the sleek straight-cut hair of the puritanical preacher.

He slept there undisturbed for nearly half an hour ; and whether he dreamed at all, or did not dream, whether his slumbers were sweet and balmy, or troubled and restless, none knew so well as his horse ; for the animal, after having cropped the grass for about a quarter of an hour, came quietly up to his master, and looked at him with a pensive seriousness, very edifying to behold, as if he were reasoning upon the quality of sleep, or wondering what the mischief his master could be about. At the end of the time I have mentioned, however, the horse gave a sudden start, and a stamp with his foot ; and the traveller, springing on his feet, found the sun upon the very verge of the horizon, pouring a rich stream of purple light straight through the great gates and over the green turf of the castle yard.

As was very natural with a horse, after having been ridden throughout a dusty day, the beast's nose was extended straight towards the well in the castle yard ; and the young gentleman, turning his eyes in that direction likewise, beheld, with a strange peculiar feeling which he could



not account for, a female form of exquisite beauty and grace standing on the opposite side of the little well, and gazing apparently towards the setting sun. She was clothed altogether in white, and though the shadow of the trees fell over her, yet there was at that moment a sort of airy lustre upon her face and person, which spread, as it seemed, through the atmosphere round her, catching even upon the rugged trunks of the elms and the leaves immediately over her head, very much after the fashion of the glory round the figures of saints in pictures of the second or third epoch of art. She was slight and small of stature ; but it seemed to the dazzled and surprised eyes of the traveller, that never in mortal form had he beheld so much symmetry and grace. He could hardly believe that he was awake ; and yet everything was clear and palpable around him : the old castle and its grey walls, and the green ivy, the yard, the chapel, the castle green, and the horse which had borne him so far. But still he almost fancied that he was sleeping, for the being before him, dressed in a fashion different from that of the day, looked so much like the creature of some brilliant dream, that he could hardly



imagine it reality. He took a step or two towards her ; and was convinced that he was waking, by seeing the reflection of the same figure in the limpid waters of the well near which she stood. The next instant, another sense was called upon to bear testimony to the truth of what his eyes avouched, for a sweet and musical voice, though somewhat melancholy in tone withal, pronounced three times the word " Back !" But, as he still advanced, the figure retreated step by step before him, seeming to become thinner, less substantial, more shadowy ; first losing its peculiar radiance, then becoming dimmer in outline, and then being but faintly seen, as it entered the dark shadows cast by the old chapel, still keeping, however, its face towards him.

He was one not easily daunted, and he exclaimed aloud, " Lady ! lady ! grant me one word of direction, for I am not sure of my way." At the same moment he sprang across the old well, bending down his eyes for a single instant to make sure of his leap. When he raised them again, the figure was gone, and he stood gazing upon the chapel like one bewildered.

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## CHAPTER IV.

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IN passing from the castle to the higher part of the village, there was a little lane between two trimmed hedge-rows with gardens on either side, filled not only with fruit-bearing trees but with several broad oaks and long-armed beeches, and here and there a poplar towering up and looking in the shadowy evening by no means unlike a cypress. The hedge on the left ended in a neat paling, defending from the encroachment of dogs and urchins a small strip of flower-garden lying between the lane and a moderate-sized house. As soon as you had passed the house, you found yourself upon a good wide piece of broken turf, flanking the sandy main road, and ornamented with a row of elms; and the eye could range down the highway between houses and gardens, and groups of trees and broad patches of waste green, dotted with sundry geese gobbling the short grass, into the more populous part of the village, till, taking a gentle turn, its further course was lost, just when the church came in sight, with the wall of the church-yard extending to the edge of the road.



The house on the left of the lane—I mean the house with the little strip of flower-garden—was both neat and picturesque, a combination not frequently found. The lower story—whether upon the consideration that land was dear and sky was cheap—had been so constructed as to occupy considerably less space than the upper story, which projected on every side nearly a foot and a half beyond the sub-structure, resting on massive beams, which were supported by the walls beneath. The roof was thatched, but in the most perfect order and repair, and the walls were nicely whitewashed, although an immense quantity of superfluous timber, forming a sort of curious pattern upon the front and sides, was still distinctly visible, giving the whole building the appearance of being covered with a damask table-cloth.

Here lived good Doctor Aldover; and towards the hour of sunset on the day I have mentioned, he was sitting, as was not at all uncommon in those times, before his own door, with a table by his side, and a jug of ale upon it.

Close to him, hat in hand, and ready to depart, was the youth with whom we have seen him speaking upon the green before the old



castle; but upon the other side of the table, seated on a settle, was the Presbyterian minister, a thin, worn, ascetic-looking personage, of fifty-six or fifty-seven years of age, whose somewhat hard features and fallen cheeks gave an expression of sourness and implacability to his countenance, except at those moments when an accidental smile played upon his lips, serving as a better interpreter to his heart.

The good clerical doctor dismissed the youth with an assurance that his father would do very well if he would take the medicines ordered him. "You see to it yourself, John Brownlow," he said; "for I have a great notion, my man, that more of the potions go under the bed than into the mouth, and I'll call upon him again to-morrow. I shall find him out, depend upon it."

"Then you don't think he's bewitched, sir?" said the young man with a sly smile.

"Bewitched? befuddled!" exclaimed Doctor Aldover; "no such thing, it is all nonsense—get away with you."

The young man retired at his bidding; but the Rev. Gideon Samson shook his head with a grave and doubtful expression of countenance, observing,



“ I hope, my good and learned friend, your observation just now does not extend to imply a disbelief in the actual existence of witches, or in the apparition of the spirits of the dead? ”

“ Nay, Heaven forbid, reverend sir, ” replied Doctor Aldover. “ That witches have existed we know from the Book of books ; and that spirits have appeared and do appear is rendered positively certain by direct testimony which cannot be gainsayed ; but whether these be mere astral spirits, or really and truly the disembodied souls of departed persons, sometimes puzzles me sorely to determine. ”

“ Astral spirits ! ” exclaimed Mr. Gideon Samson. “ That is a mere fantastic absurdity, Doctor Aldover ; a mode of explaining away facts which both Scripture, common sense, and evidence require us to believe. I suppose your sceptical coxcombs would have it that this fairy of the castle is an astral spirit, forsooth ; but I will ever maintain that it is purely and simply the re-appearance on this earth of a person long dead, permitted, for some inscrutable purpose, to revisit scenes once familiar. I suppose, Doctor, you do not think fit to disbelieve in this apparition, at least, when it has been seen by so many. ”



“Heaven forbid that I should disbelieve in the fairy,” answered Doctor Aldover meekly. “Have I not seen her myself, which is better than all argument, my reverend friend?”

“I don’t know that,” answered Mr. Samson, who was in a disputatious mood; “there are some modes of argument, Doctor Aldover, which are more convincing than even the evidence of our own senses.”

A sly smile came upon the worthy Doctor’s face; but the conversation was cut short by the appearance of a third personage on the scene; no other, in fact, than the young stranger who had passed a portion of the evening in sleeping under the castle walls. He walked forward slowly and gravely in the twilight, leading his horse by the bridle, as if either weary with a long ride, or busy with deep meditations; and, as he approached the spot where Doctor Aldover and his companion were sitting, he raised his eyes and looked at them steadily, and then, with a graceful salutation, addressed the worthy physician, inquiring if he could direct him to an inn, or any place where he could obtain accommodation for his beast and himself during the night.

“There are few inns or taverns in this neigh-



bourhood, I thank God," said Mr. Gideon Samson, taking the words out of Doctor Aldover's mouth. "We have not here much to do with lewd travellers, and no habitual revellers of our own; those are evils we are free from at least."

The answer was certainly not civil, but yet the young stranger only heard it with a smile. "There may be other travellers, my good sir," he said, "besides those whom you designate by so harsh a name; and I trust I am one of them. There are travellers for business as well as for pleasure; and they needs must find some place of public entertainment if they have no friends in the part of the country where they may be. Such is my case at present, and I shall think it somewhat hard, if with a weary beast and tired limbs of my own, I am forced to journey many miles onward, because some people might make evil uses of an inn, were such a thing tolerated in the village."

This reply seemed somewhat to soothe the worthy Presbyterian, who, as has been before explained, was not by nature a harsh or unkind man, though, as is always the case with sects claiming the utmost extent of free judgment, he was somewhat intolerant of the opinions of others.



His second reply, however, though couched in rather more courteous terms than the first, was little more satisfactory to the stranger; for it only went to show him that there was but small chance of his obtaining any accommodation in a place where, for some reason or another, he was determined to remain.

His face displayed the mortification which he felt very clearly, and just as he was turning away with an expression of thanks for what little information he had obtained, good Doctor Aldover, who had been gazing at him with some interest, but without speaking, came to his relief, saying, "My dwelling is a very humble one, sir, but if you can content yourself with that, such accommodation as it can afford is very much at your service for the night."

The young man's countenance brightened instantly; and after some faint apologies for the trouble, *et cetera*, he agreed to take up his abode with the Doctor, saying, "All that I require, kind sir, is a hard bed, a crust of bread, and a glass of water."

"Oh! we can do better for you than that," replied the worthy old man; "we can give you—"



The Doctor did not conclude the sentence as he had intended, for he stood in some awe of his Presbyterian friend, and the catalogue of good things which he was about to enumerate hung suspended on his lips. "We can give you," he said, "a cup of as good ale as any in the country, and a frugal supper—it may be of bread and cheese, or perhaps a rasher, and though my beds are not of down, yet they are soft enough to sleep upon, especially for a weary man."

The invitation thus given and received seemed the signal for worthy Mr. Gideon Samson's departure, and, to say the truth, his going did not appear at all unpleasant to Doctor Aldover, whose face brightened at his disappearance. He let him be out of earshot, however, before he made any comment, talked to the stranger about stabling his horse, talked to himself as to what room he should lodge him in, and then, calling loudly for a personage named Joshua, declared repeatedly that he was very happy indeed to have the opportunity of showing his young guest some attention.

The stranger received his civilities calmly and gravely, waited with his bridle in his hand



till Joshua appeared in a gardener's habit, and then, resigning the charge of his steed to him, walked with his host into the house, and entered a reading parlour, to which one descended by a single step. When the door was closed, however, he too began to smile ; and, taking the Doctor's hand as he welcomed him courteously, he said, " I rather imagine, my kind friend, that your hospitality is shown to one not altogether unknown to you, although you have forgotten him. Time has changed you much too, but I cannot be mistaken in thinking that I am right in calling you Mr. Aldover."

" To be sure, to be sure," answered that clerical physican. " I will never deny my name : but in good sooth, young gentleman, yours I cannot tell ; and yet your face comes back upon my memory like a dream—I wish you would say where I have seen it."

" It matters not, my dear sir," replied the young gentleman. " You saw it last in terrible times, which it were safest both for you and me not to speak of."

Doctor Aldover looked all round the room with a timid glance, as if he expected to see protruding from the wainscot the secret ears



which walls are reputed to have; and he murmured in a low voice, “Very true, very true; it is better not to talk of such things. They are a severe and suspicious people here, with very rank and hasty persons amongst them. Lord love you! my dear sir, a tavern is an abomination in their eyes; and because the boys and girls used to dance at the inn door, they called it a tabernacle for the devil, dispossessed the landlord, and shut up the house. I am very glad to see you, nevertheless; and we will have—we will have a bowl of punch. There can be no harm in that surely. I never could discover that there was any sin in a lemon, or the bitterness of malignancy in sugar, or that rum was an evil spirit, except when he got too strong for a man. We will have a bowl of punch, I declare, but with all moderation, for it is many a year since I took a ladlefull with a—a friend.”

By what free-masonry it was that he discovered the stranger to be of the same party to which he himself had formerly belonged—whether by the long locks of curling hair, or by the Cavalierish cut of his vest, or by the tie of his cravat—I cannot say, but certain it is, that good Doctor Aldover felt a moral conviction that his



guest had a great deal more of the Cavalier than the Roundhead in him ; and yet, it was a sort of timid, half-frightened assurance, which required some sort of confirmation from his own lips. Such, however, the stranger did not vouchsafe to give, but merely replied in a somewhat thoughtful tone, “ Punch is no bad mixture, my reverend friend, when both compounded and drunk with due discretion ;” and, taking this admission as confirmation of the judgment he had formed, the worthy Doctor hurried out to procure the ingredients for the fragrant bowl, while the stranger looked after him for a moment with a slight smile, and then leaned his brow upon his hands, and closed his eyes with the air of a man exhausted by fatigue either of mind or body. The short sleep which he had obtained under the castle walls was all that his eyes had known for two whole days and nights, and he certainly still felt drowsy. He struggled against it, however, for he was by no means a sleepy-headed hero ; and when he felt himself inclined to nod, he looked up and gazed round the chamber, trying to find some object sufficiently interesting to the eyes to keep them from closing. The aspect of the whole place, however, was not



very enlivening. It was a tolerable sized low-roofed room, panelled with dark oak, and having on one side of it a range of ponderous book-cases of the same material, filled principally with large folios. There is a certain degree of sleepiness even in the very aspect of a great number of big books. They weigh upon the imagination, and make the very mind feel drowsy by anticipation; so that side of the room would not do. He then looked to the other; but he was almost worse off there. Every panel was surrounded by a wreath of carved flowers, each having been, to all appearance, cut out of the very piece of wood that formed the moulding to which they were attached. They were by no means badly executed, but yet there was a certain degree of stiffness about them, a drowsy immobility, which fell oppressively upon the spirits; one would have given the world for a breath of air to stir them. It was worse still with the different carved heads with which the room was thickly ornamented. They all looked, not alone as if they were going to sleep, but as if they were sound asleep already. A grim lion seemed to nod at him here; a sleepy-looking cherub hung over another corner, as if its eyes,



according to the boys' phrase, were drawing straw ; and the devil himself, who was perched up in the centre of the cornice with a fiddle in his hand, was the very picture of Morpheus.

As the stranger gazed the objects became indistinct ; and leaning his head upon his hand he gave himself up to the influence, rousing himself only twice, and at length bowed his head to his fate, and, adding his other hand to support his brow likewise, enjoyed a few moments of perfect oblivion.

Oh ! where do its waters flow ? In what happy land, where the past is forgotten, and the future all unknown ? Thirst for what he may in life, man will often desire no other beverage so much as a few drops from that dark stream.

“The goddess dipped her mortal son in Styx,  
A mortal mother would on Lethe fix.”

Sleep, however, is not always oblivion ; and although, as I have said, the young wanderer enjoyed for a few moments that blissful immunity from racking thought, it lasted no longer. The vision came to renew the past, to paint the future. He was in the saddle again, but not as he had lately ridden. There were plumes in his



hat, and steel upon his breast, and weapons upon his side. He heard the clang of the trumpet, and the word of command, and the clash of the swords, and the rattle of the musketry, and the roar of the cannon. His horse seemed to bound beneath him, his hand to grasp the reins, his arm to wave the bright and trenchant blade. The enemy went down before him, he trampled upon them as he went on in the furious charge—nothing could resist him, nothing stood against him; onward, onward he was hurried, as if some supernatural power gave him strength and command to smite down everything before him. The pike, and the sword, and the musketoon, and the flaming mouth of the artillery, had no fears for him; victory was upon his arm and triumph upon his brow, and he thought but of success and conquest. But yet he saw his fellows fall around him; the fiery shot told amongst their ranks, the keen sabre hewed them down, they became thinner and more thin, till at length he was left alone in the midst of the fight, still conquering wherever he came, still seeing nothing stand before him. Onward, onward, through the hostile ranks he dashed, leaving a wide space cleft like a pathway through the



heart of battalions bristling with arms. Onward, onward, from the front to the very rear, past their artillery, through their tents, till not even a straggler appeared before him. Then he strove to draw in his rein, that he might turn again to the fight; but it was in vain he did so. The horse's jaws seemed of iron; and impelled by a power no human strength could overcome or guide, forward the charger went at the same headlong pace through the standing corn, over the fallow field, across the brown moor and the high hill, down into the valley, through the marsh and the deep stream. The forest impeded him not, the very rocks seemed to give way before him, his breath was as free in rushing up the mountain as in galloping across the plain; and miles, and miles, and miles, were left behind, as if the beast had the wings of thought or the hoofs of lightning.

The day seemed to go down, thunder-clouds gathered upon the evening sky, the night came on; but still, in the impervious darkness, forward rushed the steed as fresh as the morning, as unwearied as the ever-wandering sun. The rider felt exhausted, fatigued; his limbs ached and lost their strength; he felt he could not sit



his beast much longer, when, in the faint grey light of the morning, he saw a wood and an old abbey with its ruined arches and broken tracery, and there seemed thin and airy figures on the walls and at the windows beckoning him with shadowy hands, as if inviting him to enter. The reins dropped from his hand, his head turned giddy, and he fell upon the green sward at the foot of the trees, saying to himself, "Here shall I die;" but suddenly a sweet voice, the voice of a young girl, cried, "Denzil, Denzil, rise up and listen!"

And starting from his slumber, the wanderer found himself still sitting in Doctor Aldover's library. The twilight had faded away into night, but yet it was not dark, for the moon had risen and was looking in at the window. He could see every object around him as plainly as if it were day, but yet he could not perceive whence that voice came. "It was in a dream," he thought; but the moment after he heard it again repeating, "Denzil, Denzil, wake up and listen!"

"Am I still dreaming?" he thought; and to assure himself that such was not the case, he rose from his seat, exclaiming, "Who is it that speaks? Where are you?"



“Near to you, yet far from you,” replied the voice, “where you cannot come to me yet, though in time you must come.”

“What would you then?” cried the young man; “what would you with me now?”

“Come to the church at midnight,” said the voice, “and you shall hear.”

“Why not now?” demanded the young man; “why not here?”

“Come alone to the church at midnight,” repeated the voice, “and wait in the nave till you are called.”

“Who bids me do so?” demanded the traveller.

But before any answer could be given, the door of the library opened, and good Doctor Aldover himself appeared with a light in his hand.

“Why you are talking to yourself, my young friend,” he said. “Yet, after so quiet a sleep as you have had for the last half hour, I should have thought you might have chosen some other collocutor.”

The young gentleman put his hand to his brow and remained silent for a moment or two, while a neat maid-servant brought into the room a



large bowl of punch, together with several plates and dishes loaded, if one might judge by the odour, with contents by no means unpalatable. He permitted her to set them down upon the table, and make all those little arrangements upon which maid-servants are so fond of spending more time than enough, without uttering a word in reply to the worthy Doctor's observation; but when that was done, and the room once more clear, he laid his hand upon his host's arm, saying, "My dear sir, I was not talking to myself, and there is something that must be explained here. I was called by my name not two minutes ago; I answered, and received a reply in return. All this in a place where I know no one—am known to no one that I know of! Had it been a man's voice, I might have understood it in part at least; but it was a woman's tongue, and the whole is incomprehensible."

"Pooh! pooh!" said Doctor Aldover, "you have been dreaming, my good sir."

"Dreaming I have been certainly," replied the stranger; "but this took place when I had awakened from my dream."

"A change in the vision, that is all," an-



swered the worthy clerical physician, who did not seem to like the subject altogether; "it could be nothing else. When I looked at you half an hour ago, your hands were moving upon your face as if your thoughts were very busy, though sound asleep.—Come, let us to supper, my good friend. Here we have got, I think, a young fowl boiled with barley, and a leaf or two of taragon to give it good digestion, and there are some slices of bacon broiled to give a relish to our punch; sit you down, my good sir; nay, take an arm-chair."

The stranger did according to the bidding of his entertainer, and Doctor Aldover helped him liberally to the dish before him; but the young man's appetite seemed to fail, for ere he had eaten more than two or three mouthfuls, he laid down his knife and fell into a deep fit of thought.

"Mr. Aldover," he said, after this had continued for a minute or two, "I cannot rest satisfied with this mystery. I assure you I was awake, broad awake, and I received an injunction, from the voice that spoke to me, to go down to the church at midnight."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Doctor Aldover, with a



look of some surprise; "do you intend to go?"

"I must have some further insight into the case before I determine," replied the guest; "and as this occurrence has taken place in your house, I cannot help thinking you can give me an explanation if you will."

"Have you seen any one since your arrival whom you know?" asked Doctor Aldover; "I mean before you reached my garden gate; for it seems you do know me."

"No one," replied his visitor, "I met no one of any kind, except indeed one personage who puzzled me much, a lady in the castle-yard standing just on the opposite side of the well. When I sought to speak with her, she retreated before me, and in the end seemed to vanish away—at least, I could discover no farther trace of her."

"The fairy of the castle well!" said Doctor Aldover, in a low voice and in a very peculiar tone. "What was the hour?"

"Just as the sun was setting," replied the young man.

"Ay, ay! just the exact hour! It is very strange how rashly some people judge. Now I hold this to be merely an astral spirit; but good



Mr. Gideon Samson and many of the inhabitants of this village maintain stoutly that it is the spirit of some one dead permitted to return for the purpose, doubtless, of frightening their friends and relations."

The guest leaned his head upon his hand and thought, while Doctor Aldover proceeded to discuss very learnedly the difference between astral spirits and what he termed Hammethim, or the spirits of the dead; and when his worthy entertainer paused for a moment he inquired, "Pray, when did this spirit or fairy first appear?"

"It is some years ago now," answered Doctor Aldover; "in the worst times of a bad age. When first the thing was talked of, we thought it but the melancholic superstitions of the old women of the place, for it was good Dame Deborah Higgins who first saw the apparition as she went to draw water at the well, just as the sun was setting, and left her pitcher there and came away in a great fright. But several have seen the fairy, as they call her, since, and all our doubts have vanished in the place."

"Has any effort been made to speak with or to follow her?" asked the stranger.



“ Oh yes ! ” answered Doctor Aldover ; “ one young fellow, half drunk, vowed he would have a dance with the fairy, and went up to the castle for that purpose. The fairy seemed not inclined to disappoint him, for, according to his story, he saw her by the well within three minutes after he was there, and followed her across the great court, but suddenly he received a buffet from an unseen hand which laid him at full length upon the grass.”

The stranger smiled. “ Somewhat more substantial than fairy favours usually are,” he answered.

“ Ay ! I see you are an unbeliever,” replied Doctor Aldover. “ I, however, believe what I have seen, though you apparently doubt your own eyes, for you admit that they were witnesses of this sight.”

“ Nay, I doubt not,” answered the young gentleman ; “ I only think it very strange. I see no sufficient reason to suppose either that there are not many intermediate grades of beings between God and man, or that some of these beings may not become visible to us even on the earth. At the same time, my dear sir, I entertain no dread of them ; for although every man has many



sins to atone for, yet the atonement which has been made is all-sufficient, if we have but faith therein."

"Wisely and reasonably spoken," replied Doctor Aldover. "I feel the same. I acknowledge and entertain no apprehensions whatever; but the people of the place have very different feelings, so much so, that you would find it very difficult to persuade any of them to visit the church, or the castle either, after night-fall."

"I am determined to do the former," replied the Doctor's guest, "and must use your interest with the sexton to get the keys, which I suppose as rector you can command at any time."

"Alas! my young friend, I am rector no more," replied the Doctor; "I was dispossessed just after the battle of Worcester. Nevertheless, I can get you the keys easily, for they are in the hands of one who is under some obligations to me, and I will walk down with you to his house, though it be somewhat far off, and I am not fond of the evening air. Let us finish our bowl first, however, for you will need all the courage that a stout heart and a good strong cup can supply to walk amidst those old aisles and ghostly-looking monuments at midnight. There are



strange stories about that church, and true ones I believe."

"Pray, let me hear some of them," said his guest; but Doctor Aldover said, "No, no, I never repeat them, though my good successor in the ministry is not a little fond of spreading them abroad, till there is scarcely a boy in the village that does not go to bed with his knees shaking, or a girl that will open her eyes for a moment after her candle is out.—Here, let me fill your glass."

The young man took his full share of the stout beverage very readily, and the Doctor remarked, not without some satisfaction, that he looked grave and thoughtful during the rest of the time they remained in the house. Whether he really entertained any apprehensions or not, however, he steadily maintained his resolution, and in half an hour set out with his worthy host in search of the keys of the church.

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## CHAPTER V.

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THERE was a nice little cottage in the green lane that turned off from the high road, about a hun-



dred yards before you came to the castle green. The lane ploughed the side of the hill as with a deep furrow, and, descending rapidly, passed the cottage itself and a farm-house on the other hand, and then took a considerable circuit to reach the bank of the stream. Thence it led to the lower end of the village, which it accomplished by four or five little paths stretching out like the fingers of an open hand. This lane avoided all the turnings and windings which were taken by the high road, for instead of circling round any obstruction which might come in its way in the shape of a rise or fall in the ground, it went straight over them all. The little cottage I have spoken of was about half-way between the castle and the stream—a neat, tidy, though lowly building, containing within itself more accommodation than the externals promised; and though it was somewhat lonely, yet in the clear summer days it had a pleasant view both of the church and the castle, and a part of the village, and in the winter a better view still, because the leaves were then off the trees. In the front, towards the lane, was a very neat parlour, for the personage to whom it belonged aped some of the usages of gentility, and separated by a thick par-



tition that which to him was drawing-room, dining-room, and library, from the offices, although round the latter there ran a sort of trellised portico, which we, in the present day, should call verandah.

In this parlour, on the same night during which, for the first time in eight or nine years, Doctor Aldover consumed a bowl of punch with a guest, were seated two persons of very different age and appearance. We will take the one in the arm-chair first. He was a man of some sixty-eight years of age, but looking a good deal more—heavy, stout, and venerable, but with a dull sort of look, as if intellect, though not altogether gone, were a little drowsy. His face was reddish about the nose and on the cheeks, but rather pale in the intervening spaces; and his black eye, though not so sparkling as it once had been, had a good deal of sharp cunning in it, perhaps natural, perhaps acquired by long dealing with the world, that great whetstone of the faculties.

On the broad capacious hearth, although it was summer time—that is to say, the later summer, when evenings get somewhat cold—were two or three lighted logs of wood, and over them



the old man bent in his arm-chair with his hands outspread, as if the warm flame cheered the icy blood of age.

Before I go farther, however, as I have talked of a parlour and an arm-chair, and a verandah, let me first explain what sort of room, what sort of chair, what sort of verandah it is that I mean. Well then, dearly beloved reader, the parlour was floored with brick; it was low in the ceiling; and a great number of beams, protruding far beyond the rest of the plasterer's work overhead, afforded convenient positions for driving in a nail or a screw to support a number of small articles and some large ones, such as hams, sides of bacon, a powder-flask, a pouch or two of shot, besides several of those things for which we acquire an affectionate regard in passing from youth to age—things which are as if they were friends to us, from our long familiarity with them. The arm-chair, indeed, deserved its name from having two wooden arms, one on either side; but if examined closely, it was found to be nothing more than a settle with appendages. The verandah was a little sort of rustic portico with a trellis-work of rough branches, which in the hot summer evenings afforded shade to the old man



when he thought fit to sit out and drink his glass of ale in the free air.

The other tenant of the room, standing behind the first, with a yard or two between them, and a phial and a cup in his hand, was no other than the young man we have twice seen with Doctor Aldover, a good-looking, stout, well-formed peasant youth of about six or seven and twenty years of age, with nut-brown curly hair, a good deal of hardy colour, a bright clear eye, and a look of shrewd and merry intelligence. He was in the present instance in the act of persuading his father to take the medicine ordered for him by Doctor Aldover; but the old man resisted stoutly.

“No, John, no,” he said; “I ’ll take no more of it. What’s the use, John? I ’m bewitched, boy : there’s not a doubt of it; and I am sure old Martha Unwin did it, because I took her chamber clock for rent.”

“Pooh, pooh, father,” answered the son, “you are not bewitched at all : Doctor Aldover says so, and he is both a divine and a physician, so he must know. As to Martha, she is a very good old woman, and would not hurt any one for the whole world. She thought you bewitched for



being so hard upon her, but she never bewitched you."

"Then how came I to bring two tin tacks off my stomach?" asked the old man, as if that argument were conclusive; "you saw it yourself."

"Because you put half a dozen of them between your teeth, when you were mending the old coffer," answered his son; "I saw that too, myself; and if six went in, only four came out of your mouth. Come, father, take the medicine: it will make you quite well, the good Doctor says."

It required much persuasion, however, before the medicine was taken; and it had certainly not been down three minutes when old Roger Brownlow, as he was called in the village, remarked in a discontented tone, "I'm no better, John."

"If you go to bed, father, you soon will be," replied his son; and at the end of an argument of five or ten minutes more the old gentleman was persuaded to follow this piece of good advice and retire to rest. The domestic labours of John Brownlow being thus concluded, he took down his tall, plain, steeple-crowned hat from a peg on which it hung; and, approaching a door



which opened from the side of the room within a few feet of the fire-place, said in a low voice, "Alice, Alice, I am going out for a while."

No answer was returned, and, after waiting for a moment, the young man quietly mounted the stairs and tapped at a door above. Still all was silent, and murmuring, "how provoking! she has gone out!" he returned, and seated himself in the parlour, and leaned his head upon his hand.

"Heaven knows when she will be back now," he said in a murmur to himself; "and Jane will be gone to bed before I can get out. Then, all to-morrow I shall have no time. Where can she be gone to now, I wonder? she knew I was anxious to go."

He continued in this sort of vein to converse with himself, evidently not very well satisfied with the absence of the person he called Alice, till, at the end of about half an hour, some one knocked hard at the door, and John Brownlow exclaimed sharply, "Come in!"

Before the words were spoken, however, Doctor Aldover and his young companion were in the room; and the former at once began upon the business which brought him, saying, "I want



the keys of the church, John. Has your father gone to bed?"

"Yes, sir," answered the young man, with a respectful air, "he has been in bed this half hour or more; but if he were up, I don't think he has got the keys himself, for Alice always keeps them now, and she's out, I don't know where."

"Wherever she is, she is in the right place," said Doctor Aldover, "and she won't be long, I dare say; so we will wait till she comes back, John."

"I was waiting for her too, sir," said the young man; "for Betty, the girl, has gone to see her father at Crofton, and I did n't like to go out and leave my old father in the house alone for fear anything should happen, though I wanted to go out for a while very much too; but if you are going to stop, Doctor, till Alice comes back, there will be no need of my remaining."

"Ah! Jane Unwin, Jane Unwin!" said Doctor Aldover. "I know where you are going, just as well as if you told me, John; and you are two silly young people, for your father will never consent. I am quite sure of that. Well, go along with you; it's no use trying to make youth



wise. Nature makes us fools, experience whips us into scholars, and then death takes us just as we are getting the last lesson by heart. Go along with you, go along with you. I will stay till Alice comes."

The young man was not slow in taking advantage of the permission he thus received, and without further ceremony or excuses, he put on his hat again and walked out of the door which had given admission to his two visitors.

"He's a good lad," said Doctor Aldover, as soon as he was gone; "he's a good lad as any in the parish, but his father is a nasty old curmudgeon, whose whole soul has been devoted to scraping money together all his life. The young man is in love too, like a fool, with a pretty little penniless thing whom his father will never consent to his marrying; so the poor boy is in a perilous way, as old Shakspeare calls it. I know not what will come of it, I am sure, and sometimes think it almost a sin to prolong the old man's life, for it is a plague to himself and no good to any one. It is not my business, indeed, and God will take him when he thinks fit."

There was a slight rustle as the old gentleman spoke, and turning sharply round, as did also his



young companion, they saw coming down the stairs, the foot of which was visible through the door which John Brownlow had left open, the form of a young girl of seventeen or eighteen years of age, which well deserved their attention, and that of the reader also. It had all the lightness of youth and those graces which, given by nature to a very early period of life, are but too frequently obliterated in the poorer classes of society by the labours and the toils to which poverty is exposed. In Alice Brownlow, however, not one of those graces had been effaced, and the perfect symmetry of every limb was only the more displayed by every movement that she made. Not even the prim and unbecoming dress of the day could in the least conceal it, nor the plain mob-cap, showing the smallest possible portion of the black dark hair, hide or diminish the beauty of the face beneath. The young stranger, at least, thought it the fairest face he had ever seen, and while Doctor Aldover advanced and took her hand, saying, "Ah, Alice! my dear child, your cousin told us you were out, and we have been waiting your return. I thought you could not be playing truant at this hour of night."

"I have but this moment returned, sir," an-



swered Alice Brownlow ; “ and, thinking I heard some one speaking, I came down to see who it was, or if my uncle wanted anything.”

“ He is gone to bed,” said Doctor Aldover, “ so John tells me ; but what we want, my dear child, are the keys of the church, which are in your fair possession, I find. This gentleman is going to see if he can find a ghost or a fairy.”

“ He must go up to the castle for the fairy,” said the beautiful girl, turning her eyes upon the young stranger, who then, for the first time, perceived that those eyes were deep blue ; and, to say the truth, he gazed into them so earnestly, that the colour came a good deal into her cheek as she proceeded ; “ but I do not think he would find any fairy there either. I have never seen one, at least.”

“ Ah ! you are a little sceptic,” said Doctor Aldover. “ Do not let your friend, Gideon Samson, hear you, or he will put you to penance for your incredulity.”

The girl laughed, as if she did not much fear such a result, but merely replying, “ I will go and fetch the keys directly,” she ran away up the stairs again, leaving one at least of the party in wonder and admiration.



“She is marvellously beautiful,” he said, as soon as he thought she was out of earshot.

“And not less beautiful than good,” said Doctor Aldover; “but there is a very cold heart under that bright face—at least so say the youths of the village, I know not with what truth. She may be cold to love, but she is not cold to charity, that I can vouch for; for she goes about healing the wounds her uncle makes, and they are a good many. That old man was once the sexton here, and he has somehow contrived to amass sufficient wealth to make himself master of half the cottages in the village; but here she comes again with her foot of light. So here are the keys, my dear; but you must tell us which is which, for there seems a score of them.”

Alice Brownlow smiled; “I will go with you and show you, sir,” she said, “if you like.”

“He is not going now,” answered the good Doctor, “but at an hour when even you, Alice, would be afraid to go.”

“Oh, no!” replied the girl, “I have no fears at any time.”

“What, at midnight?” asked the stranger.

“Oh, yes! or at any time,” she answered.

“I do not know why people should be more



afraid at midnight than any other hour, if they have good consciences."

"Then if you will, you shall be my guide," said the young gentleman somewhat eagerly; but Doctor Aldover looked a little grave, saying. "It is hardly fit, I think. What will your uncle say, Alice?"

"Nothing," replied the girl, looking up with a frank smile in Doctor Aldover's face. "He leaves me to do as I please in all things, and he knows I do not use my liberty amiss. Do you think I do, kind Doctor Aldover?"

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed the old man; "but this gentleman is nearly a stranger to me, Alice.—I beg your pardon, sir," he continued, turning to the stranger, "but I look upon this dear girl almost as my own child."

"She is perfectly safe with me," replied the stranger, warmly; "I trust the day will never come when the very thought of injuring or insulting one like her could even enter into my mind."

"I am quite certain of it," said Alice Brownlow; "I never met with insult from any one yet, and I do not think this gentleman would be the first."

"Not for aught on earth," he answered;



“but as your kind friend here is still afraid, I see, though it may be a trespass on his time, why should he not come with us!”

“That must not be, I am afraid,” replied Doctor Aldover. “My good friend Gideon is somewhat jealous, and were he to hear that I, his dispossessed predecessor, were visiting the church at midnight, there is no knowing what suspicions he might conceive. I must even trust you, I suppose.”

“Trust is always best,” said the fair girl beside him; “I have found it so, and it will be so to the end. My cousin John will not be home for an hour or more, but if the gentleman will then come down, I will show him the way to the church and open the doors for him. The way back he must find himself, I fear, for I cannot stay, and he can put the keys in the shed by the door.”

“Farewell, then, for the present,” said Doctor Aldover; and thus the conversation ended, with the exception of a few words of very little interest to the reader, though of more to the young stranger.

“Has your uncle let the two rooms above?” asked the good physician.



“Not yet,” replied Alice.

“Nor ever will,” said Doctor Aldover; “he asks too much for them, my dear.”

The young stranger thought that he should very much like to make the worthy Doctor's words prove false. It was a rash bold fancy that he took to hire those two rooms, and he revolved the subject in his mind all the way back, not forgetting, however, to remark every turning of the road, that he might find his way to the cottage again at the appointed time.

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## CHAPTER VI.

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THE moon's short-lived reign was over, and the night was dark. There were many stars indeed in the zenith twinkling bright and clear, but round the horizon on every side there were heavy mists, not exactly amounting to clouds, but which shut out all the lesser lights of heaven. There were many trees over the road too, so that it was only now and then that Orion or the Bear could be seen; and the stranger and Alice Brown-ow walked on almost in darkness. The whole world was silent around, except when from a



great distance the baying of a dog was heard through the clear stillness of the night. There was a strong odour in the air too, as if the flowers were giving out their perfume more liberally to the cool night air than to the warm and eager day ; but yet there was a kind of faint sensation crept over the frame under the overpowering sweetness which seemed to breathe from the flowers and shrubs,—a languor tending to fanciful imaginings, to which the absence of all sight and sound contributed also.

The stranger felt it gain upon him ; the stories he had heard told, and well authenticated, came back to this mind, and many a curious question suggested itself as he walked on. To say that he was superstitious would not be correct, for, in regard to beings beyond or above the earth, he believed rather less than the great majority of people in his day ; but yet, he could not help feeling that, in reasoning analogically, there was every cause for believing, first, that the interval between the All-creating Spirit and the first of corporeal creatures was not an unfilled gap—that the upper world, if I may so term it, was tenanted, like the inferior world in which we dwell, by innumerable classes, infinite gradations of



spiritual beings; and he then asked himself, “Is it to be supposed that an impassable bar is placed against all communion between the purely spiritual and the next link in the great chain of creation?”

Reason instantly answered “No;” and whether he looked to the evidence of Scripture, or history, or the testimony of living men, he found an infinity of recorded facts to bear out the conclusion that communications of various kinds could and did take place, between the free spirit, detached from all earthly bonds, and the immortal essence prisoned in the clay. He thought of all the bold and daring carelessness with which he regarded such subjects at ordinary times; and again he asked himself, if it was not the daily round of business, the turmoil and hurry of the strife of life, the worldliness of our whole existence, that withdraws us from a sense, a consciousness, a conviction that we were ever in the presence of multitudes of fellows-spirits unseen, unknown, but whom might, if we were less absorbed in the dull things of earth, manifest themselves to us in some mode, to warn, to encourage, or to uphold?

Busied with these thoughts, he almost forgot



his fair companion for some time, as she walked on beside him, in her grey dress, and with a black silk scarf shrouding her head, shadowy almost as his imaginations. At length, however, his thoughts seemed to oppress him. He asked himself if he were going to turn coward and be afraid ; and, certainly, a degree of awe, such as he had never felt before, crept over him, and he felt cold and chilled. He thought conversation might dissipate such sensations, and, breaking the long silence, he said, “ You are sceptical about ghosts and spirits, I find. Do you not believe in the existence of such beings at all ? ”

“ Certainly I do,” replied the girl, with her sweet plaintive voice ; “ it is a belief I cherish and am fond of. I not only know that they exist, but I know that they appear ; but that is very different from fearing them.”

“ Then have you ever seen one ? ” asked the stranger.

“ Nay,” she said, “ I did not come to tell you ghost stories. You will see enough perhaps to-night to convince you, if you doubt or misbelieve ; for many of the hard and incredulous have learned, in the very church-yard to which we are going, to know that there are other things worthy of



men's thoughts besides the mere seeking after gain, the strife of ambition, or the empty toys with which grown children amuse the busy infancy of this life."

"You are a strange being," said the stranger, "and seem to have busied yourself with things very different from those which usually occupy girls of your age and station."

"I have," she answered. "Left an orphan at a very early age, my own thoughts have been my companions, and some old books, which, if they were more read, might render men and women wiser than they are. But yonder is the churchyard. Pray, remember, sir, that those who are good have nought to fear from either worse or better spirits. A free conscience and a bold heart need dread nothing on this earth or beyond it."

She spoke in a low and solemn tone, and certainly her words did not serve to cheer, though they seemed intended to encourage. The stranger looked forward on the path which they were following; but the darkness was too profound for him to see anything except the rounded forms of some large old trees, with the dark tower of the church rising above them. In another minute he stood beneath the wooden shedded portico of



the church-yard, where, in the service of the Church of England, the clergyman first meets the corpse; and he could see the low crumbling wall that surrounded the cemetery stretching away far on either side.

“It seems very extensive,” he said in a low voice.

“It had need,” replied his guide, “for there are many dead lie here: the great and the humble side by side, the good and the bad, the oppressor and the oppressed, the young and the old; the dust mingling with the dust through far-back centuries; the spirits to their several tasks as God shall appoint them.”

As she spoke she unlocked the outer gate, and led the way on as if so familiar with the place that she could not miss her way; but her companion, as he followed, stumbled more than once over the little mounds of earth cast up upon the breasts of the dead. They passed through the tall old trees which nearly encircled the church-yard, and then the young stranger could see dark masses of the building itself through the dim faint air. It was a large and heavy pile, with many a projecting buttress, and many a tall narrow window, while high up in air rose



the large square tower, solemn and mysterious in its look.

“What is that?” asked the traveller, as they came near; “there seems a light there—a faint small light.”

“Nothing but a glow-worm on a grave,” replied the girl; “the image of fame after death;” and she walked quietly on till she stood beneath the low projecting porch. It was evident that the place and the hour had their impression upon her—if not of fear, still of awe; and with hasty hand she sought the key of the church in the large bunch she carried, and applied it to the keyhole in the heavy door.

Before she turned it, she asked, almost in a whisper, “Is your heart still strong?”

“Yes,” replied her companion; and she opened the door.

“Take care how you go,” said the girl, “for the chancel is full of tombs; and remember to shut the doors after you, and lock them. I must now leave you.”

For a moment he heard her light step retreating in the deep silence of the night, and then all was still again; and he stood before the open door of the church alone. He felt a hesitation—



he asked himself if it were not folly to go on at a summons so strangely given; but something impelled him forward, and he stretched out his hand to push the door farther back. At that very instant there was a loud clang that made him start, as with a slow, swinging, wave-like sound the great clock began to strike the hour of midnight. He felt ashamed of his sensations, ashamed of having started; and with a determined step he entered.

All was dark within, and he had to feel his way. The first thing his hand touched was one of the small narrow pillars of a cluster-column, feeling cold and death-like; and then came an iron railing round a grave. That guided him on some way; but then putting forth his right arm, he suddenly laid his hand upon the icy fingers of a statue, and the first impulse was to draw back as if he had touched a corpse. The stillness was overpowering too. It seemed ~~more~~ profound, more death-like than without. In the free air, there had been a light rustle amongst the trees; the very sigh of the night-wind had taken away from the solemnity of the silence. Here, everything was hushed and mournfully quiet, not a breath of air moved through the gloomy aisles, and there was a chilly



sensation in the place, a close clinging coldness, that depressed the heart and filled the imagination with gloomy images. The grave and the worm, and the icy chill of death, and the everlasting silence, and the slow corruption, presented themselves involuntarily to the mind, and he wondered if the disembodied spirit could be permitted to see, and trace day by day, the awful changes of that corporeal frame in the powers and beauty of which it perhaps once glorified itself. His thoughts were very dark, and his heart heavy, as he reached the spot where the transept by which he entered joined the nave. He turned to the right and to the left, endeavouring to see the objects around; but at first nothing was perceptible but the tall windows on either side, looking at him like dim strange-shaped eyes, as the less intense darkness without gave them some relief from the black obscurity of all the rest. The next moment, however, something white, of the size and in the form of a human figure, seemed to gleam upon him at the farther end of the nave. As he gazed towards it he could see it more distinctly. It moved not, but remained without any apparent change in one spot, and clasping the fingers of his left hand



round the sheath of his sword, he took a step or two towards it. The figure was now more defined, apparently that of a woman, habited in a long white robe; but still it was perfectly motionless, and the young stranger said, in a low voice, “I am here! what do you want with me?”

There was no answer, and with a hasty determination, advancing straight towards the object he beheld, he found that it was a figure of white marble upon a low sepulchral monument.

“Can I have been the sport of my own fancy?” the young man asked himself; “can I have been still dreaming, as the good old man said, when I thought I heard this voice calling me? No, no; that is impossible!” and, turning towards the other end of the church, he repeated aloud, “I am here! who is it sent for me?”

There was a momentary silence, and then came a low, sweet, beautiful strain of music, solemn and sad, but exquisitely touching; and the young traveller stood listening in silent delight. But yet there was something unearthly about it too. Now it seemed far off, now it swelled nearer to the ear, now rose into the high treble, now sank muttering down in the bass.



Suddenly it ceased, and the same sweet tongue which had spoken to him before said, "Denzil, Denzil, follow, follow!"

"Where?" asked the stranger.

"To the grave," said the voice.

"To mine?" demanded the young man.

"To the grave of one who loved you in boyhood," replied the voice again. "Denzil, Denzil, follow, follow!"

"I will," he replied; "show me the way."

The moment he spoke a faint light gleamed through the church, and he could see dimly around him the gloomy aisles, and the tall columns, and the numerous tombs, with the sculptured memorials of the dead. His heart beat a good deal, but he had no time to question with himself, for the voice repeated from the other end of the church, "Denzil, Denzil, follow, follow!" and with a strong resolution, and a quick step, he hurried on, guided by the voice. The church had been stripped of many of its ornaments, the rich screen had been torn down between the choir and the nave, the seats of sculptured oak had lighted the fires of the Puritans, and all was free and open from one end to the other. But just beyond the northern wing



of the transept, Denzil could see the spot from which the light seemed to issue, still faint but stronger there than anywhere else ; and, as he approached, it appeared to him to rise from the ground. A step or two farther showed him a large flat stone, like the covering of a vault raised high, and the gleam coming up from beneath ; and when he reached the edge of the aperture, he could perceive the first steps of a stone staircase, descending apparently into the vaults or the crypt of the church. He hesitated for an instant as to whether he should descend, but the voice again called him by name, and repeated "Follow, follow !"

"I will," murmured the stranger to himself, "whatever be the consequence ;" and with a feeling of awe, for I will not venture to call it fear, he leaped down to the top, or landing-place, of the small staircase, and began the descent. "I shall soon see whence this light comes," he said ; but he was mistaken, for he found the faint rays still gleaming up, casting a long shadow behind him as he went down. Near the top, the steps seemed new and fresh, at least compared with those below ; for although they were somewhat stained and green, as if no foot



had trod them for many years, yet they were sharp-cut and firmly set in the mortar. After the first ten or twelve, however, they became rough, broken, and irregular, slippery with cold damp, and with many a foul insect crawling over them. A large toad, bloated and swollen, crept slowly across almost under the wanderer's feet, eyeing him in the unaccustomed light, with his large brilliant eyes, as if wondering what he did there ; and numerous bats, hanging together in clusters from the mildewed walls, took flight at his approach, and skimmed away upon their filmy wings.

The descent was long. At least fifty steps, turning upon a common centre, led him down, down, as if towards the very heart of the earth, and still the light receded before him, seeming as far off at the bottom as at the beginning of the descent, till at length a small round arched door appeared at the foot of the staircase, and he saw the faint rays, gleaming on before amidst innumerable low pillars and intersecting lines of masonry. At the same moment the voice said again, "Follow, Denzil, follow !"

But to obey was somewhat difficult, for the ground was obstructed, not only by loose scat-



tered stones and fragments of fallen masonry, but by the piled up bones of the dead. Skulls with their grinning white teeth, and wide staring eyeless sockets, lay upon the path, and more than once he felt the bones of beings like himself cranch and crumble under his tread as he marched along. It made his blood run cold to think that his steps were upon the ruined relics of mortal men, and he strove to see where he set his foot, but the light receding fast left him in a sort of semi-darkness, while a hooting owl flapped past him on its downy wings, and stirred the damp-smelling air around.

Smothering his repugnance, he strode on hastily, perplexed and bewildered by the numerous arches and the low columns that supported them, and unable to perceive in what precise direction the light was carried, while a low murmuring sound, as if of a multitude of voices talking at a distance, met his ear, and a cool fresh air came and waved about the curls around his brow.

“This is indeed strange,” he thought. “I know not whether I am dreaming or awake. What can be the object of bringing me hither! Yet it is vain to think of retreating now,” and on he



went till suddenly he came to what seemed the cold face of a rock, roughly hewn and fashioned, into what the ancient architects called rustic-work, with a small narrow archway through which the light still streamed, though it was partly obstructed by a heavy stone door, left half open. The young stranger pushed it back, using all his strength, but it rolled easily on the pivot which supported it, and, striking against the masonry which lined the passage beyond, produced a hollow sound and a sharp clang, like a groan and a scream. The light was before him still, and he could now see a small pale bluish white flame moving onward at a distance, but could distinguish no hand that bore it.

“Follow, Denzil, follow!” said a voice which came sweetly, almost in a whisper, along the passage, and the next instant there was a sound like the baying of a large dog, while another voice exclaimed, “Down, Fiend, down!”

Silently the young man drew his sword out of the sheath, and paused for an instant, but immediately the voice he had first heard said, “Fear not, Denzil! Follow! Nothing living has ever cowed you; fear not the dead.”

“I fear not,” answered the young man,



aloud; but yet, if the truth must be told, he felt cold and chill, and his heart beat quicker than was its wont. Onward, onward he went for nearly a quarter of a mile, the light still preceding him, casting a bright glare upon the yellow brown damp that hung about the walls, and the drops of moisture that every here and there percolated through the stones of the vault overhead. At length the passage seemed to open out, and he caught a faint sight of what seemed a large octagonal chamber, with something that looked at first view like an altar in the midst. The moment after the light was suddenly extinguished, and he stood in total darkness.

“Twenty steps farther,” said the voice, “then ask what questions you will, and they shall be answered.”

With his sword still in his hand, the young man strode on till nineteen steps were measured, and as he took the twentieth the blade of his weapon struck against some hard substance, and produced a ringing sound around him.

“Why have I been brought hither?” he said aloud.

“To receive advice which may lead you to fortune,” answered a deep stern voice.



“I must know the giver of the advice before I take it,” said the young man; “yet let me hear it.”

“It is written down,” replied the same tongue which had just spoken. “Those who give it, know what you know not, see what you see not, understand what you do not understand. They are with you, but not of you; they have guided you, and will guide you; they have watched over you from youth to manhood; they would fain see that manhood great and good, but your fate must be of your own shaping. They can but help.”

“Where shall I find this writing?” asked the young man.

“Will you obey the words that you shall find written?” demanded the voice.

“That will depend upon what they are,” was the answer. “I will do nought against my country, or the cause which I have always served.”

“If you would free your country from a yoke more burdensome than that of the bloodiest tyrant that ever ruled—if you would render triumphant the great cause in which you have fought and bled—if you would raise yourself



high in honour, and merit gratitude and renown, you will follow the advice given, unquestioning and unhesitating."

"If I understand you right," answered the young man, "I will do so; but tell me who and what you are; I would fain see you face to face."

"Him you cannot see," said the sweeter voice which he had first heard. "Denzil Norman, ask not what cannot be."

"But you, you," said the young man eagerly; "you, I think, I have already seen: show yourself now."

"So be it," replied the other voice, and instantly a light shone through the whole place, again displaying the octagon stone chamber, with its vaulted roof, and niches, as if for statues, all around. Exactly in the centre was a plain stone tomb with an inscription on the slab of free-stone on the top, and over it was scattered a profusion of fresh flowers, in the midst of which lay a small roll of paper.

A single object, however, attracted the whole of the young man's attention. One of the large niches, some four or five feet from the ground, seemed open like a Gothic arch, and filled with



light, in the midst of which stood the same beautiful figure he had beheld by the castle well, clothed as before entirely in white from head to foot, with long rich curls of glossy light brown hair falling over her neck, and breast, and shoulders. He paused in deep silence and amazement, and then, stretching out his hands towards the figure, he was about to speak, when the sweet voice said, "Pray for an instant by the side of the tomb of her who guarded your youth, and was a mother to you when your mother was laid in the grave. Then take up the paper, begone, and obey."

The young man knelt by the tomb, catching sight of one name inscribed upon it as he did so, and bending his head, with the tears streaming from his eyes, upon the cold grey stone, he prayed for an instant as fervently as he had ever prayed in life. Then, rising, he stretched out his hand and took the paper, and the moment he had done so all was darkness.

Denzil Norman stood bewildered for a moment or two beside the tomb, with his thoughts all troubled and his heart beating fast.

"Stretch forth your hand," said the deeper voice of the two which he had heard, and with-



out reply he obeyed. The moment he did so, his fingers were clasped tight in the grasp of another hand ; but it was not a hand of flesh and blood. The hardest-working artisan in all the world never had a hand like that—cold as that of the dead, and hard and stiff as adamant. He would have withdrawn his fingers from those that clutched them, but he could not ; and the voice said, “ Follow, follow ! ”

On he went, as the cold hand guided, slowly and silently ; for though the young gentleman spoke twice, he received no answer. The way seemed interminable in the darkness and the silence, and there was an oppressive feeling in the air which showed him that he was still in the vault. At length, however, a gust of fresh night wind came upon the young man’s cheek, and the moment after he perceived a low door open before him, with the faint external light just marking it out in the darkness. He turned quickly in the hope of seeing who was his guide, but at the same moment the hand relaxed its grasp, and the voice said, “ Forward ! ”

Three steps more brought him upon the green grass of the church-yard, and, the instant he had passed through the archway, the door banged



to with a loud clang, which made the whole of the old building echo with the sound.

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## CHAPTER VII.

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AT day-break Denzil Norman sat in his room at Doctor Aldover's alone with the dove-coloured light of dawn streaming in through the window, and falling upon a table before him, on which was stretched a scroll covered with characters written in very black ink. The paper was yellow as if with age, and part of the writing was in a tongue or rather a cypher which the eyes that looked upon it were unacquainted with. A few lines at the top and at the bottom of the page were in the ordinary English hand and language, though there was something cramped and stiff in the formation of the letters, which gave them a strange and antique look. The young gentleman gazed on the paper with a thoughtful air, and repeated in a low voice, "Stay here a week, and then journey as a messenger to the north?—Well, it matters not where I stay or whither I go. In all places there are dangers; in all places there is a Providence. I will obey these strange commands; but where



can I find lodging in this place without an inn? I cannot trespass longer on the hospitality of this good old man."

He then remembered the conversation between Doctor Aldover and Alice Brownlow, just before they parted, regarding the rooms her uncle had to let, and his resolution was soon taken. Ere mid-day he was installed, the tenant of Roger Brownlow's lodgings, and the old man acknowledged, with the simplicity which not unfrequently accompanies a single passion, especially that of avarice, that he did not know which had done him most good—the having let his rooms, or Doctor Aldover's last dose.

Alice, who was present, smiled gaily; and the good Doctor laughed, saying, "The money, Roger; the money! that is your disease, and medicine too. But come, Roger, the young gentleman has given you two gold twenty-shilling pieces, out of which you owe him ten. Go and get him a couple of fresh Olivers out of your coffer, or you may forget that he has not had his change."

"I'll go, I'll go," answered the old man; "but just let me have a word with you, Doctor, before you depart;" and away he walked, tak-



ing Doctor Aldover with him. Left alone with his fair guide of the night before, Denzil Norman took the opportunity of thanking her; for he had remarked not only that no word of his visit to the church had been spoken in old Roger Brownlow's presence, but that Doctor Aldover himself, no longer under the exhilarating influence of a good glass of punch, had been exceedingly shy of the subject. Not so Alice Brownlow, however, for she now spoke freely of his expedition, and questioned him as to what he had seen, in a tone so light and gay as to form a strange contrast with her demeanour on the preceding night.

Denzil Norman found it somewhat difficult to parry her quick inquiries, and only succeeded in doing so by assuming the same tone as herself. A little gallantry certainly mingled in his manner too, whether he would or not; for he thought her even more beautiful by daylight than he had done on the preceding evening, and the sparkling grace of her whole manner, in this more cheerful mood, seemed to render her only the more engaging. "I think," he said, "that I shall call you the fairy of the cottage, as we have got a fairy of the castle on the hill above."

"I wish I were a fairy," said the girl with a



sigh ; “ I could do many things then, that I cannot do now.”

As may be supposed, Denzil Norman did not let slip the occasion of inquiring how she would exercise her fairy powers if she possessed them; and she answered, “ In healing wounds, in making the good and the wise happy, when an adverse fortune dooms them too frequently in this life to sorrow and disappointment.”

“ Nay,” replied the young man, “ that, according to the old legends, is more the function of one of the nine orders of angels than of an inferior being like a fairy. But have you no one in particular you would benefit?”

“ Oh, to be sure!” replied Alice Brownlow, with a gay smile; “ every one has somebody whom they would wish to serve.”

“ And who would be this favoured one with you?” asked Denzil Norman, not quite well satisfied with the reply. “ It is perhaps a bold question to ask a fair lady like yourself.”

The girl laughed. “ How curious men are!” she said. “ The lions are the painters, and they have represented women as all curiosity, while in truth it is man’s peculiar vice; but you shall not be disappointed, noble sir. Some day



I will show you the person I would wish to benefit, but it must be after longer acquaintance."

The young gentleman, as may be supposed, pressed hard for speedier knowledge, although, to say the truth, he had many doubts whether that knowledge would be pleasing to him; for since the day when Adam ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree, down to this present time, an insatiable thirst has been upon the mortal lip for knowledge, knowledge, knowledge—not only of good but of evil; it is knowledge that we want, whether it be a curse or a blessing, and the devil has ever, as then, an excuse ready for our seeking it.

"I would fain know," said the young man to himself, "whether her heart is given to any one, and to whom. I feel she might be a dangerous companion in this secluded place, and if I find her love has been won, I shall be sufficiently armed against the peril. It is strange that I, who have moved amid the brightest and the fairest, in courts and cities throughout one-half of Europe, should never have seen one who seemed to me so fair and bright as this cottage girl. But it is nonsense thinking of such things—Denzil Norman in love with the niece of Roger



Brownlow ! That is out of the question. I would give a great deal to see her lover ; and I will, please Heaven—some mere boor, I dare say ;” and he continued to press her on the subject, till she answered, in the same gay tone in which she had hitherto spoken, “ Well, well, sir, you shall be satisfied if you will take a walk forth with me this evening—quietly and secretly, remember, inasmuch as my good uncle must not know anything of the matter ; for ‘ thereby hangs a tale.’ ”

Still the answer was not pleasant to him. He almost wished that he had refrained. He fancied he caught a fluttering blush upon her cheek—that he detected a slight embarrassment in her manner, gay and cheerful as it was ; and yet he was determined to carry the inquiry to the end, for, let sceptics say what they will, uncertainty is the most painful state of life.

“ Give me some sign, then,” he said ; but before he could finish, or Alice could reply, Doctor Aldover returned with old Roger Brownlow, and soon after took his leave, promising his late guest that his horse should be well cared for at his stable, and that his saddle-bags should be sent down immediately.



The rest of the day passed very pleasantly to Denzil Norman ; for although he wandered forth for a short time, yet, as had been previously arranged, he returned to take a homely meal with the family of his host, and sat long, to say sooth, in the parlour of the cottage, conversing with the fair Alice ; while the old man nodded in his chair hard by, and left his lodger and his niece to amuse themselves as best they might. Denzil found that such conversation was not without its peril ; but there are some men fond of standing on the brink of a precipice, and though he felt a little giddy, yet he would not withdraw. A reader may ask, what they talked of ? but to be answered by another question, what did they not talk of ? for, although he was evidently a high bred Cavalier, and she a country girl, she led him to a thousand themes, and through a thousand courses of thought, which her mind seemed to tread with ease when his had almost lost its way. Sometimes it seemed to him like the course of a butterfly, sporting from flower to flower, and resting but a moment on each ; sometimes like some brilliant dance, through which the feet of imagination played sparkingly, seeming all wild and uncontrolled,



and yet with a form and plan in every movement.

At length, however, she started up, saying, "I must away, I have an errand to perform;" and passing through the door which has been mentioned, on the left of the fire-place, she ascended the stairs, as it seemed, to her own apartment. A moment or two after, however, while Denzil was looking at the old man, who was just rousing himself from his slumber, he saw a wimple and hood pass the window of the cottage; and, taking his hat, he issued forth and looked for the fair wearer. She was nowhere to be seen, however; but that was not at all wonderful, for the manifold lanes and alleys, and their thick hedge-rows, rendered it very easy to lose sight of any object of pursuit. For some time he wandered about in the hope of discovering which way she had taken; and then, giving up the chase, he bent his steps towards the castle, the grey towers of which he could perceive rising high over the trees.

"I will think no more of this fair young creature," he said to himself; "I have thought of her too much already;" and, with a habit which he had acquired in perilous times and many painful circumstances, he strove to force his mind



away from the thoughts that would engross it, and fix them upon those calm external objects of Nature's handywork, from which it is difficult even for the perverse heart of man to extract anything that is evil or dangerous. "How beautiful the scene is!" he continued, in thought; "if I can find my way to the top of yon little hill, I shall get the best view of the castle, I fancy;" and following a path which seemed to lead thither, he was brought round under the old towers, at the distance of about a quarter of a mile. The way was steep; and walking quickly, as all men do who strive to fly from thought, he paused after a while to take breath, and looked up to the ivy-covered walls. As he did so, he suddenly beheld a form appear upon the battlements of the highest tower. It was the same he had seen the evening before at the well; the same which he had seen in the vaults. The white garments, the flowing hair, the light and airy form, which to the eye of fancy seemed almost transparent, were there, with the light of the sun, not yet declined four hours, shining full upon them; and with a rapid fearless step it passed along upon the very edge of the crumbling walls, and amidst the



tottering pinnacles, till it reached the top of a small watch-turret, overhanging the path which he was ascending, and there pausing, as if suspended in the air, with a grave and warning gesture it waved him back.

The young man paused and hesitated ; and three times the sign was repeated : then suddenly the figure disappeared from his sight, as if it had sunk at once through the tower. Denzil Norman gazed down upon the ground for a moment or two, then turned upon his steps, and made his way back to the cottage.

He found the old man with his son beside him. John Brownlow, who seemed to have been informed of all that had taken place during his absence in the morning, eyed the stranger not uncivilly, and, while finishing the meal to which he had come in late, inquired which way the stranger had directed his steps in his walk.

“By a small road to the eastward, that leads under the castle walls,” replied Denzil Norman.

“Then you must have met the soldiers, I suppose,” replied John Brownlow. “I passed them on that road about an hour ago.”

Denzil gazed at him steadily for an instant,



and then replied in a calm tone, "No, I met no soldiers. What troops are they, pray?"

"They are Lambert's men," answered the other; "marching to the north, they told me."

"Then they do not remain here," said Denzil Norman, with the same unconcerned manner.

"No," replied John Brownlow, "they must go five miles further before night; but we are to have a company quartered upon us in a few days, I am told." As he spoke, he fixed his eyes upon his father's lodger; and when he had drunk off his horn of beer, he rose, saying, "Have you seen our garden, sir? It is very pretty;" and he took a step or two towards the door of the kitchen, through which was the only exit to the back of the house. Denzil Norman followed, saying he should like to walk through the garden with him; but as soon as they had issued forth, and proceeded some little way amidst the quaint flower-beds which surrounded the apple trees, John Brownlow stopped, and said in a low voice, "I think, sir, you had better keep yourself to the house till these men are gone on."

"What makes you imagine I have any cause to fear them?" asked Denzil Norman.



“Your hair, your French boots, and your gilt-hilted sword,” answered John Brownlow. “I know not what may be done in London, but here we do not see such things often; and, depend upon it, some of the officers would inquire who you are, and what brings you here. You know best your own business, but I have given you my advice honestly.”

“And I will take it,” answered Denzil Norman. “But how shall I know when they are gone?”

“I will let you know,” replied the other. “You had better say nothing to my father, but just sit in your own room, and pretend to be busy writing.”

The evening sun was just setting upon Landleigh castle and village, when Denzil Norman once more walked up the hill with Alice Brownlow by his side. Their way lay through the shady lanes, athwart which the level sunbeams glanced, tinged with a rosy hue, as the sun sank down to rest; and as they caught upon her beautiful figure and sweet face, they seemed to the eyes of her companion to draw forth strange graces and new charms; and his contemplation ended with a sigh. It might be fancy, but he



could not help thinking that there was something strange about her altogether—a power, a captivating influence, which no one seemed able to resist. He had seen her that evening with her uncle and her cousin, and they appeared to feel the spell as much as he did. The old man was tame in her presence, strove to conceal before her even the ill qualities he was vain of, and yielded to her lightest word like a child. The young man, though frank and straightforward, still sprang to do her slightest bidding, as if her commands were his law; but yet, there was something in his whole manner to her, and in hers to him, which swept away at once the suspicion which had crossed the mind of Denzil Norman, that her cousin might be her lover.

She had been very gay and cheerful throughout the day; but now, when they were alone together in those green lanes, the graver spirit had fallen over her again; and he found deep and strong thoughts, powerful often from their very simplicity, mingling in every answer which she made him, though from time to time a touch of sparkling lightness would cross the whole, like the sunbeams darting through the shade as they



passed along. He strove to keep pace with the variations of her mood ; and, as she had heard of the arrival and halt for an hour of the soldiers in the village, Denzil told her, in gay and jesting strain, of his pursuit of her fair self some hours before, and the cause which had induced him to turn back. “ I must be strangely favoured by this fairy,” he said ; “ and as we seem passing near the castle, I should like to turn in at the gate for a moment, and see whether she will favour me again with her presence when I have got a companion with me fairer than herself.”

Alice turned and gazed at him for a moment with a grave look. “ Do not speak lightly,” she replied, “ of fairy favours, nor ever pretend to doubt whether you do not. I will go with you to the castle, if you please, with all my heart, but it will be of little use, for we here know, right well, that the fairy never appears more than once in the day to any one.”

“ Indeed !” replied Denzil. “ She is very regular in her habits, then ; I thought fairies were more capricious. Nevertheless, I should like to look through the castle with you, for fair scenes are ever fairer when we see them with one who can appreciate their beauty.”



Alice looked in his face with a faint smile. "It is the return of thought for thought," she said, "which brings forth the treasures of the mind and the heart. What would the light be without the shade? and even an inferior mind may often, by the contrasts it affords, give greater brightness to the rays of a higher one. We have little of such interchange of thought here," she added with a sigh; "but here we are at the castle walls, and we can go in by this small gate as well as by the greater one."

They went in, and, passing through what seemed to have been a narrow outer court, soon found themselves in the larger open space with the old castle well before them. The sun was shining straight through the arch upon the crystal water and the green trees above it, but no fairy form was there, and Alice stood by the side of the well, and gazed up thoughtfully at the old towers. "Here reigned the bright and noble in the days long gone," she said; "and all have passed away. Their very memories are like a faint echo, amongst the hills, of words spoken once aloud, and repeated farther and farther distant till they become indistinct. Thus perishes man and his memories! I wonder how many kings and



warriors, now forgotten, once thought that they should live for ever in the minds of men."

"All things pass away, and all things are renewed, fair Alice," answered Denzil Norman. "We have—at least I have—seen all our institutions swept to the wind, kings proscribed and slain, princes banished, lords done away, parliaments reduced to a mere name, laws used to destroy laws, and injustice of every kind perpetrated in the name of justice. Yet from all this, as when the earth is ploughed with the deep share, and harrowed with the rough harrow, will, I doubt not, spring up the same institutions as those which went before."

"No, not the same," she answered; "things very much resembling past things, but not the same. I'll tell you how the course of the world seems to me to go," she continued, laying her hand familiarly on his arm. "A simple figure is always the best and the clearest. Did you ever tend a garden? If you did, you will know that each flower and each tree, if you take the seed thereof and sow it, will produce things of the same kind, but not exactly the same. Gather the seed of a tulip or a poppy, and put it in the ground; you will have tulips



and poppies spring up the next year, but varied from those which went before. Thus, methinks, with worldly institutions; even when they perish they leave seed, but that seed never reproduces the same. Come, let us not stand speculating here. We are amongst dead things—I have living ones to show you;” and turning to the great gate she passed out, then took her way to the outskirts of the village, and, followed by Denzil Norman, entered a cottage, the door of which stood open. Within they found a woman in extreme old age, yet hale and healthy for her time of life, and by her side, busily spinning, as fast as her fingers could go, as beautiful a country girl as ever mortal eyes fell upon.

“Ah, Dame Unwin!” said Alice, “I am glad to see you back; I hope poor Bridget is better.”

“She is better than any of us, my dear,” replied the old woman, “for she is in heaven. The good Doctor did all that man could to save her, for her poor husband’s sake, and I did what little I could do, but it was of no avail, poor thing. God had called her to himself, and she went. The minister has taken two of the babes home to his house, and the Doctor put the other



one out to nurse, so the poor man's cares are lightened."

"I fear he could not repay you, granny," said Alice.

"She would not have taken a penny for the world, Alice," replied the girl, looking up from her work, and plying her fingers still. "Should the poor be hard upon the poor?"

"Heaven forbid," said Alice Brownlow; "but you seem very busy here, Jane. Who is it for?"

"Partly for us, partly for them," answered the girl; "but you see, Alice, we have got the clock again. We found the money in the window on Tuesday morning last. Granny would hardly use it, for she said it was fairy gold, and it might turn to leaves or straws when old Roger Brownlow had got it."

"He would not take anything that was not full weight and tale," answered Alice; "be you sure of that, Jane. It is a good fairy, not a bad one; and if she ever brings me anything, I shall have no fears about it."

Some further conversation passed, and then Alice and her companion took their way homeward. "You have seen," she said, looking up in Denzil's face with a smile of some meaning,



“those for whose sake I wish I was a fairy.”

“They seem kind good people,” said Denzil Norman, a little confused with the memory of his own doubts.

“The old woman tends the sick poor,” said Alice, in a slow and feeling tone, “when they have no one else to tend them; and the girl works cheerfully from dawn till night to support her grandmother and herself. She will one day become John Brownlow’s wife; but that day is afar, and I could wish to be a fairy, to abridge the long hours of expectation for them. Now, do you understand me?”

“I do, at length, entirely,” answered Denzil Norman, warmly; “but such a heart as yours may not be easy to understand at once.”

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## CHAPTER VIII.

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It was still dark, although there was a faint grey streak upon the edge of the eastern sky, and Denzil Norman’s head was on the pillow, dreaming of Alice Brownlow. He had been at Landleigh six days, and more than once he had dreamed of her, both sleeping and waking, and each time



the vision had become brighter. Suddenly, however, the dream was dispelled, and the sleep broken. There was some one knocking at his door; and, starting up, he exclaimed, "Come in!"

The next moment John Brownlow entered, with a light in his hand. "Up and away, sir, as fast as possible," he said. "A company of Lambert's troops are in the place; and they were reading last night, where the officers are quartered, a proclamation, ordering the apprehension of several persons, amongst whom was named one stated to be passing under the name of Denzil Norman."

"Passing under my own name, then," said the young gentleman, with a smile.

"But not all your names, sir," replied the young man, "or else they are mistaken; for some one mentioned your being in the village, and they are to be here at day-break to take you out of your bed."

"Well, leave me then, good John," replied Denzil, "and I will rise and go. I have been in worse perils than this before now, and shall be in worse still before they make me lose heart. It is hard to be hunted thus, like a hare before



the hounds ; but still we must abide our fate. Run up to Doctor Aldover's, if you would serve me, and have my horse ready. "

"That is cared for," answered John Brownlow ; " the horse is at the end of our garden : I will go out in the front and watch till you are ready. Alice is below. "

Denzil Norman rose in haste, and dressed himself ; placed all his small portion of worldly goods in his saddle-bags, and was about to descend, when, by the growing light, he saw a paper lying on the window-seat. He could not remember having left any there ; and, on taking it up and looking at it closely, he perceived that it was in the same hand-writing as that which had been given him in the vaults. He had no time to examine it further ; but, hastily concealing it in a pocket between his vest and his shirt, he threw the saddle-bags over his arm, and went down to the room below.

The cottage windows were still closed ; but Alice Brownlow was standing beside a table, on which was a light, with a grave and thoughtful face. She did not move when he entered ; but Denzil advanced towards her at once, and took her hand, saying, " Alice, I must away, and that



with all speed ; but I shall never forget the hours I have passed here. ”

“ Stay not to speak of such things, ” answered Alice ; “ every moment is precious for flight. ”

“ I must stay to give you three commissions, ” replied the young gentleman : “ first, give that gold Carolus to your uncle. I promised him something for attendance. Is it enough ? ”

“ Too much, ” answered Alice.

“ Next, there are five for good Dame Unwin, ” he continued rapidly ; “ I am poor, or I would send her more. Will you give them to her for me ? ”

“ I will, ” answered the beautiful girl, with an anxious look ; “ what is the third ? speak quickly. ”

Denzil Norman still held her hand in his, and his fingers clasped more warmly round it, while he gazed in her beautiful face with a look of strong affection. “ The last is, ” he said, “ love me, as I will you, till we meet again. ”

Alice made no reply, but a warm glow, like that of the rising sun, sprang over her cheek and brow.

“ Will you do that too ? ” asked Denzil in a low and agitated voice.



“It were soon promised,” replied Alice; “for in a week you will forget the cottage girl.”

“Never,” he replied eagerly; “never while I have life. Perhaps there has been a struggle, Alice, between prejudice and love; but the struggle is over for ever, and if I escape—if I live, I will return to ask this dear hand. Oh! give me hope to cheer me by the way.

“Go, go!” said Alice, turning away her face; “every moment brings you into danger.”

Before he could answer, John Brownlow hurried into the cottage and locked the door behind him. “This way! this way!” he cried; “they are coming down the hill. Quick, quick!” and he caught Denzil’s arm and drew him towards the door, which led through the kitchen to the garden behind. Alice, as if by an impulse she could not resist, started forward and laid her hand on that of the young fugitive. Denzil cast his arms round her, and pressed his lips upon her cheek. “Be true!” she whispered; “and you shall find me true.”

The next instant he was in the garden, and he could distinctly hear the measured tramp of marching men. The ground sloped down on that side of the house towards the river and the



valley ; and the thick apple trees afforded a complete screen to almost all the little paths which had been formed in the garden. Through these John Brownlow led his companion with a quick step, till they reached a hedge with a low gate in it, within fifty yards of the stream.

To the gate was fastened Denzil Norman's horse ; the saddle-bags were soon attached to the saddle ; and, putting his foot in the stirrup, the young gentleman held out his hand to his companion, saying, "Farewell, John, with many, many thanks. We shall meet again, I trust, in happier days, when I can thank you better."

"God bless you, my lord," replied John Brownlow. "Hark ! there is some one running down the hill—Away, away ! Over the turf, that they may not hear you."

Denzil was in the saddle in a moment ; his horse was fresh and full of fire ; and, bounding forward over the turf by the river side, he soon bore his rider beyond pursuit.

For two hours Denzil Norman rode on without drawing a rein ; but often directing his course to the top of any high hill he came near, in order to examine the country he had passed, and ascertain if any one followed. He could see no



signs of pursuit, however, and at length he halted in a meadow by a little stream, to let his horse drink and crop a mouthful of the green grass. His first thoughts were of Alice; but there were others that came soon and pressed for attention. "I will to the north," he said to himself, "but now for this other paper;" and drawing it forth he examined it more minutely than he had been able to do before. It was all legible enough, and he read the following directions, evidently intended for himself, although the paper bore neither address nor superscription.

"Go with all speed towards Newcastle," so ran the writing; "but avoid Lambert's posts. In the village of Corbridge, stable your horse at the inn called the Hart. You will meet there a short, stout, dark man, whom you shall ask if his name be Gideon. If he reply, "Yea," then tell him that Portsmouth holds out against the army, that the soldiers sent against it have declared for the Parliament, that the troops in London have done the same, that Lawson and the fleet will abandon the fanatics, and that Desborough's force is safe; but, above all, let him know that Fairfax holds York, and that he



may trust in him. Stir not from Corbridge till you see him."

"These are strange directions," thought Denzil Norman, "but yet I will follow them, although I doubt the accuracy of the tidings. Who can this short dark man be?"

His reverie was interrupted by the distant blast of a trumpet, and, springing on his horse again, he was soon once more upon his way northward, nor stopped till he had put the distance of forty miles between himself and Land-leigh. Still the journey before him was long; difficulties and obstacles interposed: now he found himself in the neighbourhood of some of Lambert's forces, and was obliged to take a circuit of several miles; now his horse cast a shoe, and no blacksmith was found to replace it; now he was impeded by finding no boat at a ferry; and thus eight days elapsed before he reached the fair banks of the Tyne.

It was late in the evening when, after descending the river for some fifteen or sixteen miles, he inquired for the village of Corbridge, and was told that it lay about a mile before him. Slackening his pace, then, that he might enter the place with the appearance of a mere tra-



veller journeying leisurely on his way, he reached the inn door just as the sun was setting, and carefully attended to his horse before he entered the room of general reception. He found it entirely vacant, and a host without much custom anxious to show all attention to an unexpected guest. The best of everything was soon placed before him, and his meal was just finished, when he heard the sound of horses before the door. Some time elapsed without any one appearing, and expectation began to fade away, when he heard a voice without giving some orders, apparently to a servant. The next instant the door opened, and a stranger entered, who eyed him for a moment and then sat down at a distance. Denzil Norman examined him well. He was somewhat above the middle age, a stout man, and a dark one, but he could hardly be called short, although he was not so tall as the young cavalier himself. The expression of his countenance was somewhat grave and stern; but after the first look, he took no notice of his companion in the room until the landlord had served him a frugal supper, and a black jug full of some drink. As the latter was put upon the table the stranger asked a



question in a low voice; and when the room was again clear, he turned his head towards Denzil Norman, and said, with a less surly expression of face, "The landlord tells me, sir, you come from the side of Carlisle. Is there anything stirring in those parts?"

"He is mistaken, sir," answered Denzil Norman, "I have not been near Carlisle; my journey has been from the southward."

"Ay! indeed," said the stranger, and he proceeded with his supper.

"Perhaps, if you belong to this part of the country," said Denzil, after a short pause, "you can inform me, sir, where I can find a person who calls himself Gideon."

"There might be more difficult things than that," said the stranger.

"Is your own name Gideon?" demanded the young gentleman.

"Yea," replied the other. "You have news for me, it seems."

"I have," replied Denzil; and he proceeded to repeat to him precisely the information which had been contained in the paper. As he did so, he watched his companion's countenance; and, although he could see that the intelligence



he conveyed was not without effect, yet the indications were too slight for him to judge whether that effect was pleasurable or otherwise.

“When did you set out?” demanded the stranger, after the detail was concluded; and on being informed, he replied, “Methinks the fairies must have given you this information even before the events happened.”

“They did,” replied Denzil Norman. “At least I know no other source whence the intelligence came.”

“Indeed!” said the other, “You are a good messenger to bring tidings without knowing whence they come. But methinks you should have a paper for me, young gentleman; have you it about you?”

“I have,” replied Denzil Norman, somewhat drily, for he was not altogether pleased at the tone of authority which the other assumed. “Here it is;” and he laid it down upon the table before him, without taking the trouble of rising to deliver it. The other man smiled, rose from his seat, crossed the room, and took the paper. He then examined the cypher by the light, and seemed to read it over attentively;



but his brow grew instantly dark, and he demanded sternly, "Do you know the contents of this paper, young man?"

"The part which is written in English, I do know," answered Denzil Norman. "Of the rest I comprehend not one word."

"Happy for you, you do not," said the other; "happy for you that your want of reverence makes me believe that it is so, for were it otherwise, I would hang you on the tree before the door. Nevertheless, you shall be taken care of; and as you would value your life, take care how you use your tongue with those people in whose hands I place you. Ho! without there! bring up a guard."

"Yes, my Lord General," answered a voice; and the next moment several soldiers appeared at the door.

As may easily be conceived, the feelings of Denzil Norman were of no very pleasant kind; but there was about the Cavaliers of that period an assumption of indifference to the evils of life which was not of the best school of philosophy, but which affected even those of higher toned mind and character. "I should remonstrate, sir," he said, "upon being subjected to incon-



venience for having very civilly borne you a message, the import of which I did not understand, if remonstrance were likely to be of any avail ; but having lived long in a country where neither law nor reason are very effectual, I think it best to hold my tongue."

"You do wisely," replied the other drily ; and then added, addressing the officer of the guard, "Remove him."

"Shall we search his person, or examine his papers, my Lord General?" demanded the officer.

"You will do at your peril anything more than the strict letter of my commands," answered the other, "which are, to remove him, and keep him under arrest with all due civility till I make further inquiries. Send Mr. Clarges hither."

"One question before I go, sir," said Denzil Norman. "May I ask at whose command I am to be subjected to imprisonment, for amongst all the Lords Generals whom we have lately heard of, I am unacquainted with the name of General Gideon?"

He was a famous man, too, in his day," replied the other with a faint smile, "and a great general ; but my name is Monk."



“ Oh ! very well,” replied Denzil, with a mind a good deal relieved, and without farther comment or resistance he followed the officer of the guard out of the room.

The life of Denzil Norman for some time was a very unpleasant one, for it was a life of uncertainty and of confinement. The belief generally prevalent, that Monk was favourable to the royal cause, of course, had its effect in relieving his mind from any serious apprehensions for his personal safety ; but yet to be in the midst of scenes where the great game of policy was playing, without knowing any of the moves, and without the power to take any part, uncertain of his own fate, or the fate of his country and friends, was at once painful and exciting. Rumours he could not but hear, movements he could not but see ; but the truth of the one, and the causes of the other, he could not in any degree divine. He was treated with general civility, and gradually had more liberty allowed him than at first ; but still he was obliged to consider himself as a prisoner, and seemed more the sport of caprice than the object of just precaution. At one time he was permitted to go out for an hour or two on parole ; at another was strictly con-



fined in whatever place the army might be. Sometimes he fared well in his prison, sometimes had little more allowed him than mere bread and water.

From the small town where he had been captured, he was removed to Berwick, then to Edinburgh, then to Coldstream, and then advanced with the army into England in the midst of a severe winter. But that which struck him as most unaccountable was, that not the slightest inquiry was made with regard to his name, station, or quality ; no examination took place of his small baggage, which was always carefully placed in the same room with himself ; and had it not been for the guard at his door, and the occasional changes which occurred in his treatment, he should have thought that Monk had entirely forgotten him. At length, on a wintry and inclement evening, the army approached York, and the well-remembered cathedral appearing, in the grey light, showed Denzil Norman that he was coming near a city where he was known to many, and threw him into meditation in regard to the chances of effecting his escape by their aid and assistance.

A little reflection, however, induced him to



refrain from attempting it. There was something he could not help thinking very peculiar in Monk's conduct towards him. Perhaps, indeed, he was influenced in this view of the case by the treatment he had lately received; for, since the army reached Durham, his fare and his quarters had been very superior to those which he had met with before. However that might be, he was inclined to imagine that the general was not so harshly disposed towards him as his demeanour at first might have induced him to believe; and in the end he asked himself, "I wonder what effect perfect frankness will have upon this man?"

The opportunity of trying was soon afforded to him, for as he was riding with a trooper by his side, Monk himself passed by on horseback, gave him what seemed to be a casual glance, and rode on to the head of the army. In about ten minutes, however, a young officer appeared, and informed the prisoner that he would be permitted to choose his own lodging in the town, upon the condition that he presented himself every morning at the general's quarters.

"Give my humble duty to the Lord Gene-



ral," replied Denzil, "and tell him that, for particular reasons, I cannot avail myself of his permission till I have spoken with him for a moment."

"Ride on with me, then," said the young officer; "but you must be quick, for he is going forward into the town."

Monk was soon overtaken, however, for he had stopped to converse with some of his principal officers, and the message of his prisoner was delivered to him as soon as a pause took place. He looked at Denzil for a moment, from under his bent and somewhat shaggy eyebrows, and then beckoning him up, as he rode on, he asked him abruptly, "What is the meaning of this? Is your money expended?"

"Not so, sir," answered Denzil; "but you cautioned me to be careful of what I said and did, making me imagine that you would rather I should have no communication, public or private, with any of my friends. I have now to tell you that I have more than one acquaintance in York and its neighbourhood, with whom I shall most likely be brought into communication if I am at liberty in the city."

Monk mused. "It were well to avoid it,"



he said at last. "Who do you know at York?"

"I know the Lord Fairfax," replied Denzil, "and several others in the town."

"I will consider," answered Monk. "Retire for the present;" and without another word he rode on, leaving his prisoner in custody of the trooper. That night he was lodged at the quarters of the General, and remained two days a close prisoner. He was sitting at an early hour on the third morning, feeling some mortification at the result of his frankness—for though, according to the old copy-line, "virtue is its own reward," yet we are seldom inclined to be satisfied with that sort of recompense—when the door opened, and, with his slow step and sedate carriage, Monk himself entered the room and sat down.

"You are discreet, young gentleman," he said, "and honest—rare qualities in the world. I can trust you, which is what I can say to few men."

He paused for a moment or two, and Denzil asked himself what this preamble was to lead to. The stop was so long, however, that he had almost come to the conclusion that Monk had delivered himself of all he had to say, when



that officer resumed, "Under these circumstances, and upon the assurance of Lord Fairfax, I have resolved to give you all personal freedom, notwithstanding your boldness in bringing me letters containing matter little short of high treason."

"I was perfectly ignorant of the contents," replied Denzil, "not being learned in Arabic, or whatever tongue they were written in."

"You knew who sent them, at all events," replied General Monk; "and that was sufficient."

"Not so," answered Denzil Norman; "I was as ignorant of one as the other."

"Strange enough!" replied Monk. "But to the point. I will give you, as I have said, all reasonable freedom upon conditions, which are, first, that you accompany me soberly and quietly to London, presenting yourself at my quarters every morning; secondly, that you mention to no one who or what you are; and, thirdly, that you make no attempt whatsoever in favour of persons who may be your friends without communicating with me."

Denzil marked with very strong emotions the last phrase in Monk's address. In difficult times, and circumstances most perilous to himself, he



had learned from very small indications to guess at, if not divine, men's feelings and intentions ; and with a heart greatly relieved, he replied, " I accept all the terms, my Lord General, and you shall find that I adhere to them punctually. Perhaps, when you find that I do so, you may grant me permission to absent myself for a short time, as I am anxious, on many personal accounts, to visit once more the place from which I brought those letters you have mentioned."

" All in good time, all in good time," answered Monk ; " but now, remember, should you have occasion to speak with me, or any information to give, affecting the good of the state, say it not rashly, even should I seem alone ; for there be men full of doubts and jealousies, who have not even scrupled, in this very town of York, to bore a hole through my chamber-door in order to gain a hearing of my private conversation. I warn one who will take a warning, I think ; and I will beg you to remember, young man, that there is a certain name which it is an offence to mention in the ears of many people in this land with whom I am at present compelled to deal, and therefore it must never be uttered between you and me."



“ May I know, Lord General,” said Denzil, “ how I am to contrive to obtain private audience of you, should it be needful ?”

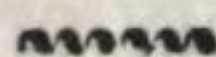
“ Merely say, when you come to me,” replied Monk, “ that it is your wish to speak with me in private, and I will find the means. Be ready at my call, however, whenever I may want you ;” and, thus saying, he left the room.

The thoughts of Denzil Norman, when Monk was gone, were of Alice Brownlow, and they were sweet.

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## EPOCH THE THIRD.



## CHAPTER IX.



It was a bright morning in the month of May 1660, and the light and shade were skipping over the fair village of Landleigh, bringing out a thousand different beauties in their passage, when the sounds of drum and trumpet were heard upon the castle green, and a small body of horse rode in and formed in line nearly opposite to the great gates. The smallest event has its rumour, and it is therefore no wonder that a full hour at least before the entrance of the soldiers, the tidings of their approach had reached Landleigh. Thus—although those were times of doubt and suspicion, and the sober citizens and peasantry, even when fanatically inclined themselves, looked upon the military hypocrites of the day with much awe and trepidation — a number of the inhabitants of Landleigh, amongst whom was many a stout young peasant and buxom country girl, were assembled on the castle green to see the arrival of the soldiers. The officer at the head of the troop was no very fa-



vourable specimen of the class to which he belonged, either internally or externally. Though not absolutely ugly, his countenance was anything but prepossessing; though tall, and in reality strong, there was a shambling ungainly look about his limbs which gave one no great idea of his corporeal vigour. His character was one not unfrequently met with in every age, but which was peculiarly developed by the times of which I speak. Excitable, sensual, and worldly, he had cunning enough to discover that his passions could be best served, and his interests advanced by an assumption of zeal for the predominant tenets of the day. He had pursued this course cunningly for many years, and there are few minds so incapable of enthusiasm as not to obtain by long habit a tincture of the views they affect. As a man is sometimes deceived by his own lies, so are men frequently cheated by their own rogueries, and Colonel Okey doubtless believed himself a fanatic in religion, and a republican in policy.

But a truce to description. We have to do with a few of the man's actions, the springs of which will be easily understood by those who have at all studied the history of man. After



marshalling his troopers and glancing his eyes round the villagers with a look which, when it rested upon the female part of the assembly, betokened no very unearthly feelings, he harangued his men with common-place cant of the wilder and more enthusiastic sectaries, who then struggled to retain that power and predominance which they had for many years enjoyed and misused in the land, wresting texts of Scripture from their original meaning, and applying them in the most forced and extraordinary manner to the events of the times. With all the rest he mingled a confusion of commands and directions, which none but those accustomed to such strange oratory could at all comprehend, and from which the villagers, habituated to the homely but intelligible preaching of Mr. Gideon Samson, could only make out that General Lambert was in arms for the repose and domination of the saints, and that the soldiers were exhorted to denounce every one, wherever they might meet with him, who could even be suspected of favouring the malignant proceedings of Papists, Prelatists, and Presbyterians. He ended by a call upon the inhabitants of the place, under the most fearful denun-



ciations of wrath, to give up without delay all persons who might harbour or conceal themselves in the village from the wrath of God and man; and then, dismissing his troopers to their quarters, he rode slowly into the village himself, followed by one or two of his officers, after having commanded a muster of the troop at the same place, and at the hour of five in the evening. He took his way straight down the high road, going at a slow pace, and examining the different houses as he went with the eye of one seeking a comfortable lodging; but it would seem that he had previously received some information concerning the characters and opinions of the inhabitants, for he at length fixed upon a house, by no means the best in the place, but one inhabited by a man after his own heart,—the grocer, or, as we should call him, the chandler of the village. Mr. Culpepper's notions of predestination, saintly freedom, sufficiency of grace, and other dogmas, were held in high detestation by Mr. Gideon Samson, whose own doctrines were uniformly pronounced cold, comfortless, and carnal, by the more enthusiastic grocer. After feeding liberally, and drinking somewhat deep, considering the early hour in the morning, Co-



lonel Okey held a long private conference with his worthy host, at the end of which he walked out into the village, and visited several of the houses and cottages, amongst which was that of Roger Brownlow, where he remained for some time in private conference with the *ci-devant* sexton. It might seem, indeed, that the subject-matter of their conversation was of no great moment, for when they issued forth from the room formerly tenanted by Denzil Norman, John Brownlow, who was below, heard with consternation his worthy father assuring Colonel Okey that he had been "bewitched by the old hag," under which denomination the young man naturally concluded was meant poor old Martha Unwin.

"Well, Master Brownlow," said the Colonel, "I will visit and interrogate her this very day, and on my return will proceed, in her case and all others, to put down the kingdom of Satan, and establish the reign of the Saints upon earth."

Thus saying, the worthy Colonel quitted the cottage, and a somewhat sharp dispute took place between father and son in regard to the reputation of Dame Unwin. But the Colonel's



last words implied a hint not lost to the ears of John Brownlow, who, as soon as the angry discussion was over with his father, hurried away to the cottage of the poor old woman, to warn her of the officer's friendly intentions towards her. As he approached the house, he thought he heard the voice of his fair Jane raised in higher and less gentle tones than usual; and, lifting the latch, he pushed the door sharply open. It struck with a violent clatter upon the steel back-piece of Colonel Okey, who was holding both Jane's hands tight in his own, and addressing words to her pure ear which made the blood boil in the veins of her lover. The hypocrite let go his hold and started back; and, placing himself by Jane Unwin's side, John Brownlow stood gazing in the officer's face, strongly tempted to knock him down on the spot, yet dreading the consequences to all whom he loved.

With a swaggering and supercilious air, often assumed to cover confusion, Colonel Okey turned to the door and quitted the cottage without saying a word; and in an hour or so after, he was once more pouring forth the rabid strain of hypocrisy and cant, with which he was wont to delight the ears of his fanatical soldiers.



The following morning the troops marched out of the village, and the inhabitants rejoiced in the thoughts of having got rid of their unwelcome guest ; but John Brownlow remembered the hint that Colonel Okey had given of his intentions to return, and with a degree of vigour, determination, and good sense, which his fellow-villagers had not expected of him, he took the first steps towards preparing the people of Landleigh for resisting, in case of need, the aggressions of the insolent soldiery. Presbyterians and Churchmen for once united together to make common cause against those who were enemies of both, and, with the exception of Mr. Culpepper and a few of his particular associates, all the inhabitants of the place prepared themselves, determined to resist to the last. But, alas ! professions of resistance in peaceable men are not much to be depended on ; and when, two nights after, a corporal's guard entered the village, bringing intelligence that the Colonel and his men would be there early on the following morning, the scene of consternation that ensued amongst those who had been so bold but a few hours before was both ludicrous and lamentable. Rumours crept amongst them, whether spread by the soldiery or not I



cannot tell, that the Lord General Lambert was in the immediate neighbourhood with a large force; that he had defeated the troops of the new Parliament, and proclaimed a pure and perfect Republic, the whole affairs of which were to be carried on by a committee of twelve saints. The people of Landleigh, it would appear, were in a very ungodly state, for they seemed to dread nothing so much as this saintly domination. Some were actually preparing to run away, but a mere hint from a single soldier was quite sufficient to make the most forward of them skulk back to their houses; and early the next morning, the report spread through the village that both good Doctor Aldover and Mr. Gideon Samson had been apprehended in their beds without warrant.

By the grey daylight John Brownlow was at the door of good Dame Unwin's cottage, and he was not kept long waiting ere it was opened for him. A hurried consultation ensued as to what was best to be done, and at length it was determined that Jane and the good dame should take refuge in a part of the ruins of the castle, where John Brownlow assured them that they might lie concealed till the soldiers departed.



“I will come to you at sunset, dear Jane,” he said, “and bring you provisions, and all that I can think of to make you comfortable.”

Jane seemed to entertain no apprehensions; but the old lady—all witch as she was—entertained a great dread of the fairy, and it was not without much persuasion that she was induced to go forth with her granddaughter to make abode near the spirit’s well. Their little journey was not without trepidation, for Jane fancied she saw a soldier in every bush they passed in the lane leading to the castle green; and, by the time they reached the end of it, all three became convinced that they heard steps following. Quickening their pace to a run, however, they passed the open space in safety, darted through the old portal, and were led by John Brownlow up a narrow and tottering stair to a small chamber in one of the gate towers.

“No one would ever think of seeking for you here,” he said; “and as I go down, I will take away one of the stone steps that are loose, so as to make it seem more difficult than it is to get up. Don’t be frightened, good Dame Martha, for the fairy is a kind fairy, and one soldier is worse than any that ever danced upon the green.”



The good lady, however, made him repeat over and over again his promise to rejoin them at sunset, and to sit up with them till the cock crowed at dawn.

During the morning there was a parade of the troops on the castle green, and an examination of Mr. Gideon Samson and Doctor Aldover before Colonel Okey ; and there had been a search for old Dame Unwin and Jane, and a proclamation with sound of trumpet against sundry malignant enemies of the state and commonwealth of England, amongst whom the principal person was Charles Brook, Lord Eustace, reported to be harbouring in or near the village of Landleigh. But the parade of the troops passed over, and the soldiers returned to their quarters. Nothing was extracted from Mr. Gideon Samson but fiery abuse of anabaptists and fanatics and fifth-monarchy men, nor from Doctor Aldover but meekness and submission. Dame Unwin and her granddaughter were not found ; and at the name of Lord Eustace, the villagers shook their heads, and murmured that it would be long ere his enemies found that good kind lord, for he had died at Worcester fight. The day, in short, went by with less results of any kind than had



been expected; and all seemed quiet in the village when the sun touched the edge of the horizon.

At that moment John Brownlow was standing under the arch of the castle gateway, loaded with many things to make the two poor fugitives as comfortable as might be, and, after taking a cautious look round, he entered the tower on the left, and began ascending the dilapidated stairs.

Hardly had he disappeared, when, silently and quietly, four men came forth from a part of the ruin on the right of the gate, showing the faces of Colonel Okey himself and three of his soldiers; and the commander whispered, "After him, quick and noiselessly. You will find them all together if you go quietly."

The soldiers hurried on, and were lost to sight under the low arched door of the stairs, while Colonel Okey himself remained under the gateway. In less than a minute he caught the sound of loud voices speaking above, and an unpleasant smile came upon his face. Then descending steps were heard through the loop-holes, and in a few moments more poor John Brownlow, with old Dame Unwin and Jane, appeared under the guard of the soldiers.



“Here, bring them here!” exclaimed the officer, taking a few steps into the great court. “Let me look at their faces. Here’s a pretty one at least;” and he put his hand under Jane Unwin’s chin.

It was more than John Brownlow could bear, and he was starting forward with his fist clenched, when a voice exclaimed, “Forbear!” in a tone sweet and musical, but loud and penetrating; and all eyes turned towards the spot whence the sound seemed to proceed. There, standing as before, on the other side of the well, appeared the same beautiful figure, clothed in white, with the sort of lustrous light upon her face and garments, which Denzil Norman had seen when first he visited Landleigh.

“Forbear!” repeated the figure. “Bad man, forbear!”

Every one was silent for an instant; but then, with an exclamation strangely mingling blasphemy with fanaticism, Colonel Okey darted forward towards the well.

“It is the fairy! It is the fairy!” cried Jane Unwin.

“Were it Beelzebub, I would bring him into captivity,” said Colonel Okey; but the fairy re-



ceded before him, and ere he could run round the well she had reached the same gloomy archway through which she had disappeared when followed by Denzil Norman.

“Keep them fast till I return,” shouted the officer, turning his head to speak to the soldiers, and the next instant disappearing in the gloom.

“Verily, he is rash to trust himself with spiritual enemies,” said one of the soldiers, gazing at the walls and towers opposite. “Mayhap she will lure him to some perilous place, and there seek to destroy him.”

His words seemed to be verified the moment they were spoken; for hardly were they uttered when, in the clear evening twilight, the beautiful figure, in its floating white garments, was seen walking with a step of light along the very edge of the crumbling battlements, where the loose stones seemed hardly fitted to support the very softest tread. The next instant the head of Colonel Okey protruded from a small door-way in a tower, looking upon that part of the curtain along which her course lay. The figure paused as if poised in air; and a clear short laugh was heard, followed by the words, “Come on, come



on!" and instantly Colonel Okey sprang forward, several of the stones giving way under his feet, and rolling into the court below. At the same time the figure he was pursuing resumed its rapid course towards a round tower, in the western wall of which were still to be seen the fragments of a stone staircase, that formerly led up to the higher apartments of the keep. She reached the foot of the tower, and then began to ascend by the broken steps, which were only supported on one side by the old wall into which they were built.

"Forbear, Colonel, forbear!" shouted one of the soldiers. "Do not sacrifice the life of one of the saints in pursuit of a shadow."

But the officer hurried recklessly on, and then began to mount with a slower step, when suddenly a black arm was thrust through one of the loop-holes, and at a single blow hurled the fanatic down into the court below; while at the same moment the female figure disappeared, vanishing apparently into the body of the tower.

"I knew it, I knew it," cried one of the soldiers. "It was written in the Book that he should be so slain, even by the powers of darkness;" and at the same moment he sprang



forward towards the spot where the unhappy man had fallen. The two others were following, when they were reminded of the prisoners by a somewhat untimely movement of Dame Unwin towards the gate ; and, unceremoniously drawing their swords, they commanded the unwilling captives to march on before them to the spot where their unsanctified commander lay. To the surprise of all, however, on approaching, they found Colonel Okey endeavouring to raise himself upon his arm. His escape might indeed have been considered miraculous, in a fall from such a height, had it not been that some thick and tangled bramble-bushes had gathered round the foot of the tower, and had received him, on his descent from above, in a soft, though somewhat thorny, bed. Sorely bruised, indeed, he was, and stunned, and confused with the fall ; but the evil spirit was by no means driven out of him, and his first exclamation was an order to look well to the prisoners. He remained some time upon the ground unable to rise ; but when, with the assistance of one of his troopers, he succeeded in getting on his feet, he poured forth long and bitter complaints in regard to the misfortune which had befallen him, savouring very



little of saintly resignation. Indeed, the expressions that he used were neither more nor less than imprecations in another form, and probably comforted him as much as a volley of oaths would have solaced an habitual swearer. With these complaints over his bruised body, he mingled orders for removing the three prisoners to the house where he had taken up his abode, and guarding them strictly till he should be well enough to deal with them as he might think fit. This done, he limped away, grumbling every step he took; and was fain to call for the assistance of Doctor Aldover to soothe his hurts as best he might.

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## CHAPTER X.

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SURELY there is no faith to be found on earth. We trust not, we hope not, as we should trust and hope were we really and thoroughly convinced that there is an over-ruling Providence, a just Judge, a future state. We look to this world alone. If we trust, it is in our own strength; if we calculate, it is upon worldly chances; if we despair, it is because this life is our all.

The heart of John Brownlow burned within him as he sat during the livelong night in a



small garret-room, with a soldier at the door, separated from his companions, and every moment fancying her he loved exposed to insult, and perhaps to injury, from a brutal and licentious hypocrite. It was in vain that he tried to console himself; it was in vain that he looked around for help or hope. He trusted not, he thought not of trusting where trust only is sure; and he passed the whole hours of darkness in the fever fits of cold despair and fiery indignation. He saw the day break at length without having closed an eye; and the soft light of the early morning was perhaps more painful to him than the shadows of the night. He heard people moving about, he heard voices speaking, he thought he could distinguish the tones of his dear Jane; and he would have given all that he possessed on earth for some intelligence of her fate. For many hours, however, he was kept in the bitterness of suspense. No one came near him, no one spoke to him, except when once he tried to open the door, and the voice of the sentinel without bade him keep quiet under the threat of the strapado.

At length the door was thrown back, and he was hurried with a good deal of rude brutality



into a large room—a sort of hall, indeed, it might be called, which had been built by worthy Mr. Culpepper as a place of meeting for himself and his fellow-fanatics. A table was stretched across the upper end of the room, beyond which was placed an arm-chair. A soldier, with an ink-horn and some paper, sat at one end of the table; and Colonel Okey himself, with his head bound up and his arm in a sling, was seated in the chair of state. At a little distance from the table stood old Martha Unwin and her daughter, both as pale as death. Several of the villagers, more especially of the Culpepper faction, were between them and the door; and behind all were a number of troopers, mostly with grave faces and arms folded on the breast.

The room, indeed, had somewhat the aspect of a court of justice; and old Roger Brownlow, who stood before the table speaking, seemed acting the part of a witness. The sight of his father in such a capacity was no great consolation to the young prisoner; nor were the first words he heard at all calculated to relieve his anxiety.

“That is quite sufficient,” said Colonel Okey, as John entered, apparently addressing his father.



“She shall have a full trial by water. Take her away, Hezekiah Strong-i'-the-arm, and worthy Good-fight-the-fight-of-faith Perkins. Conduct her quietly to the river side at the deepest part, and cast her in, taking care that she reach not the land on the same side, but that, if the fiend help her, she pass clearly over. If she succeed in doing so, we will give her over to the fire ; for no witch must be suffered to dwell in our Israel.”

The old woman uttered not a word ; for, to say the truth, her senses were quite benumbed by terror at the prospect of a fate—to the disgrace of the land be it spoken—not at all uncommon in England at that period. Jane, however, cast herself upon her knees before the brutal tyrant who threatened her aged relation with the dreadful alternative of perishing by water or by fire, and poured forth wild entreaties for mercy, mingled with appeals to the villagers present to give some testimony of the acts of kindness and Christian charity which had so often been performed by her, now so brutally condemned.

Okey gazed at her with a fiend-like smile, and then beckoned to her to come round to the same



side on which he was sitting ; but at that moment John Brownlow's indignation mastered all prudence, and, starting forward through the crowd, he caught Jane's arm, exclaiming, " Go not near him, Jane. He is a base lewd hypocrite, and you know it. Go not near him, my love. He dare not do what he has threatened."

" Ha, ha, young viper's spawn!" exclaimed Okey. " Dare not? Do you think we have girded up our loins and ridden forth with our swords upon our thigh for nothing? You shall soon learn what the saints of the Lord dare when the spirit moves them. Have you not aided to harbour and conceal that malignant traitor Charles Brooke, called of men Lord Eustace? Have you not comforted him and abetted him after proclamation made, and contrary to the laws of this land of England? Have you not received rents for him, and offerings from dark-minded and perverse men, who were once his tenants, but who now owe nothing to any one but the Commonwealth of England, and those to whom it shall give a portion in the marrow and fatness of the land? Dare not to deny it, for thine own father is a witness against thee, and against himself also, if we chose to be extreme



with him ; but, considering that he has given us a knowledge of these things, and how we may bring the most guilty to justice, we will spare the old adder, seeing that the poison is squeezed out of its fangs ; but we will tread upon the head of the young adder, lest it bite the heel of the saints. In less than one hour shall the malignant Charles Brooke become the captive of our bow and spear ; for we have surrounded his hiding-place with godly men, who will take care not to let him forth. In the meantime, however, we will smite his comforters and adherents hip and thigh ; and thou, and the prelatie malignant Aldover, who consorted with thee in thy evil deeds, shall die within ten minutes from this time, even upon the green before the castle gates. Here, Obadiah Jason, take the young man away, and bring the old man out of the prison where thou hast imprisoned him ; and see that they be both shot to death upon the green within ten minutes, for which thou shalt have our warrant, according to the powers granted us by our commission under the seal of the Committee of Safety.—What is it, Joshua Scroggs, thou man of valour ? What causes that tumult at the door, and who is it thou halest along so sturdily ?”



“ Verily he is a captive whom we have taken, worthy Colonel,” replied the corporal, to whom he addressed himself, speaking in a harsh rude voice. “ I was hastening up with my men to relieve the guard at the gates of the castle, and I hurried my steps when I was upon the green, for methought I heard the voices of many persons speaking loud and tumultuously. But, lo ! the sentinel was walking calmly at his post, and he heard not the sounds that were revealed to my ears, when suddenly I beheld this youth walking slowly towards the castle, and I saw in him all the signs of the man of Belial. Behold his love-locks and his boots of French calf-skin, and his sword-knot of blue and white, and his G—d-d—mme hat, with a band of ostrich feather !—and, meditating with myself, I said, ‘ Woe be to the land when such things walk abroad in open day,’ and therewith I apprehended him, and brought him hither. Stand forth, thou man of Belial, and give an account of thyself.” And he pulled roughly the arm of a man, the principal part of whose face and figure was concealed by the crowd which filled the lower part of the room.

“ I will stand forth, if you will make way,”



replied a voice; "for, to tell you the truth, my good friend, you have only brought me where I was coming." And at the same time, putting the soldier somewhat roughly aside, Denzil Norman advanced into the little open space before the table, and took his place by the side of young John Brownlow.

"Who art thou, bold boy?" demanded Colonel Okey, gazing upon the young gentleman with some surprise, and not altogether without apprehension, as he marked the calm and almost contemptuous smile with which the young Cavalier looked at him. "Take off thy hat. Knowest thou in whose presence thou standest?"

"Oh, sir! I am sorry to see you here," said John Brownlow, with his fingers clasping tighter upon those of Jane, whose hand he held, and, unlike the generality of men, really feeling distressed to see a new companion destined to share in his misfortunes.

But Denzil Norman, without noticing him, replied to Colonel Okey. "I know well in whose presence I stand; but, nevertheless, I shall keep my hat upon my head, as I have no reverence for any one I see before me. You asked my name, sir. It is Denzil Norman."



“Ha! ha! hast thou found me, mine enemy?” said Okey; “but now shalt thou know what it is to be in the hands of those who will not spare. Art thou, I ask thee, that Denzil Norman, Lord Blount, who slew my nephew, my sister’s son, when thou wert but a boy at Worcester?”

“I am,” replied the young Cavalier, without the slightest sign of emotion; “but what of that, Master Okey? It was hand to hand in fair fight, a lad of eighteen against a man of thirty. He died fighting against his king; I lived to fight for my king another day.”

“That thou shalt never do,” answered Okey; “for thou hast seen the last sun thou ever shalt see. Take him away, Obadiah Jason, and do him to death with the rest.”

“Nay, nay,” answered Denzil Norman; “not quite so fast, Master Okey. A word or two more before we part.”

“Take him away!” shouted Okey, by no means well pleased at the young nobleman’s bold bearing and tranquil smile. “I know what he counts upon—the nest of traitors and scorpions in London, and the false and deceitful Monk; but he shall find himself deceived, for were it the last day I had to live, this hour shall he die. Take him away, I say!”



“Nay, then,” answered Denzil Norman, putting his hand into his breast, “if you be so imperative, Master Okey, I must take another course ;” and, drawing forth a pistol, he levelled it across the table at Okey’s head, adding rapidly, “The man that lays a hand upon me signs your death-warrant. — Bid them hold back !”

“Hold back, hold back !” cried Okey, his face turning pale ; “hear what the young man has to say.”

“It will be soon said, Master Okey,” answered Denzil. “Listen, all men. In virtue of a commission under the hand and seal of General Monk, commander-in-chief of all the land forces of England, I hereby apprehend you, John Okey, for high treason, and I command you instantly to surrender. You, troopers of the seventh troop of Lilburne’s regiment, by the same power and authority, I command you to lay down your arms, and every man to betake himself peacefully to the house where he is quartered, to await the decision of the Commissioners in your case—giving you, at the same time, to know that the commissions of Generals Fleetwood and Lambert have been revoked by



the Council of State, and that, six days ago, the latter, who resisted the authority of Parliament and the Council, was encountered near Daventry by Colonels Streater, Ingoldsby, and myself, his men routed, and himself taken prisoner, to be dealt with according to law. See that you obey! —To you, villagers—If you move a hand or utter a word, Colonel Okey, I blow your brains out on the spot—I have more joyful tidings to announce. Your King is restored, bringing with him pardon and oblivion for all offences, toleration for all religions, and peace and happiness to his subjects. Neither have any fear of these misguided men who have quartered themselves amongst you; for know that the castle and the church are by this time in the hands of my regiment, and that the report of this pistol will fill this room in one minute with faithful subjects of his majesty.—Long live King Charles!”

“Hark!” cried a voice from behind, “there is a drum.”

As is usual in such cases, a momentary hesitation had come over those persons who, an instant before, had felt the greatest confidence in their own power and strength, now that they perceived the chances were turning against them.



It was not, indeed, that they were utterly dismayed; but their minds hung in the balance, as it were, as to what course they should pursue, and the least weight thrown into either of the scales was certain to decide between the most opposite courses.

The sound of that drum had well-nigh given the preponderance to the more timid policy; but there was more than one stout heart amongst Okey's troopers, and the stoutest of them all, because the most fanatical, was that of the corporal, Joshua Scroggs. "What!" he exclaimed, starting forward, while the rest stood round with looks of moody hesitation, "do our hearts wax faint because the battle rages strong against us? Shall we be deprived of the captives of our bow and spear because the Amorite triumph in the hill country? Did not Barak, the son of Abinoam, coming out of Kedesh-Naphtali, go up against the hosts of Jabin, King of Canaan, with few people, and did he not prevail against him even by the side of the river Kishon; and shall we be afraid because the castle and the steeplehouse are in the hands of the Philistines? No, verily, this young man shall die as thou hast said, and the other young man, and the old man



with him, because they have brought the abominable things into our Israel, even a king and a king's crown, which the land had spued forth."

"Beware, Colonel Okey, beware!" cried Denzil Norman.

"Hark! they are in the streets before the house," cried a young man from the window, looking out.

"Call them up," shouted the young Cavalier; and, instantly letting go Jane Unwin's hand, John Brownlow started towards the window.

One of the troopers, however, threw himself in the way, and knocked him down with the hilt of his sword, when at once the confusion became general.

Some voices shouted. "Long live King Charles!" some "Down with the men of Belial!" The crowd in the room swayed hither and thither as several strove to push forward, and not a few to escape; and, in the midst of the confusion, Joshua Scroggs threw himself upon the young Lord Blount, and endeavoured to pinion his arms. But Denzil was as strong and more active, and turning the pistol from Okey towards the head of his assailant, he fired, and the man fell back, knocking down with his



ponderous weight one of the soldiers who was hurrying up to his assistance. A loud rushing tramp was heard from the door, as of a multitude of feet hurrying up the stairs, and the next moment a number of steel caps and grim faces appeared pouring in, and the voice of Denzil Norman shouted aloud, "Arrest every man found in arms, and let the rest go. Quietly, quietly; we have had too much strife already."

"Take that, at least, for thy part," cried one of Okey's troopers, levelling a carbine towards him. A villager, however, who stood near, struck the man a blow on the arm at the very moment he was pulling the trigger, and the shot, passing by Denzil Norman's head, with one of those retributive accidents which we so often see occur, hit old Roger Brownlow on the temple, and laid him convulsed and prostrate on the ground.

No further resistance was offered; the troops, who might now be called Royalists, poured into the room, and although the scene of confusion, of which I will not attempt to give the details, continued for about a quarter of an hour longer, all was at length quieted, and Colonel Okey and his companions removed from the room, leaving



Denzil Norman with some of his officers and one or two of the villagers. Amongst the latter was John Brownlow, who, notwithstanding his own deliverance from peril and immediate death, felt too keenly to experience joy, not alone the sad fate which had befallen his father, but the treacherous course which that father had pursued.

“Be comforted, my good friend,” said the young nobleman, after he had given orders to remove the body to the old man’s cottage.

“This was an accident which but shortened his days by a very brief space, and, perhaps, it is better to terminate life with one brief pang suddenly over, than to endure prolonged suffering, or the wearisome exhaustion of gradual decay.”

John Brownlow was a simple and not very well educated peasant. He affected to be nothing more; but there is something in plain good sense superior to all education and to all talent, and he replied, “I think, my lord, that everything must depend upon preparation; and it is with grief I ask myself, ‘Was he prepared?’”

Lord Blount felt rebuked, but it was done without the slightest assumption, and he replied



at once, "That is too true. Nevertheless, my good friend, let us not, even in our thoughts, limit God's mercy. Go home now, and tell your fair cousin that I shall be at your house soon. I have many things to deal with, but I will not be long ere I visit you."

John Brownlow smiled faintly. "You will not find Alice there," he said; "but I will tell you more, my lord, when I see you. She, too, has had duties to perform, and has performed them well; but, if I might advise you, your lordship would look to the safety of Lord Eustace. He was your old friend, I understand, and if these men have dared such things here, what may they not have attempted there?"

"My old friend!" replied the young Cavalier. "He was more than a father to me; but I fear not for him. They had no power to injure him. Now leave me, John. We will soon meet again."

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## CHAPTER XI.

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AN hour had passed, and while minute after minute of that time crept by, not less than a third part of the time had been spent by Denzil



Norman, Lord Blount, in deep meditation, with his hands covering his eyes, as he sat in the chair so lately occupied by Colonel Okey. His orders had been given, his arrangements made, soldier after soldier had quitted the room, and no one remained on that floor of the house but the guard at the door. He was left all alone in the hall, where one of those little tragedies had taken place, which, though enacted in a smaller space than the greater dramas performed on the wide stage of the world, often afford a deeper and more concentrated interest. The hall was large, as I have said, and looked larger in its vacancy. Benches and settles had been removed, and nought remained upon the floor but the dark-red stains of blood where the soldier and Roger Brownlow had fallen.

Twenty minutes may seem a long period for meditation, but who can tell how many were the different images which presented themselves to the young man's mind during that time, how wide was the range of thought, how discursive and how erratic was the course that it pursued. In those twenty minutes the present and the past were revolved, and the future came in for its share of consideration; but memory, perhaps,



was the most busy, and the eight or nine years last past presented a thousand objects to arrest the mind.

It was only wonderful that so much was crowded into so small a space. Where did his thoughts wander? To Worcester field—the flight—the pursuit—the first battle he had ever seen, with its fiery strife, and its thrilling interest—the disastrous defeat—the breathless gallop for life and liberty—the long concealment—the passage to another land—the life of privation, adventure, and care, and all that had succeeded, seemed like a dream; painful, confused, irregular, yet full of dark and powerful emotions, and things which could never be blotted from memory. But if from the fountain rose up drops of bitterness, yet there was one sweet and balmy stream mingled with the less refreshing waters, and seemed to enrich and beautify the garden of the future. It sprang from the memories of the place in which he then was. In a humble cottage, with nothing to decorate, to enrich, or to beautify, there appeared to remembrance a form and a face never to be forgotten. His ear still seemed to hear the musical tones heard many months before,



his heart to thrill, his imagination to take fire, with the high thoughts presented to him by a simple peasant girl. There was no hesitation, there was no doubt, as to his own conduct. He had learned a deep, a stern, a wholesome lesson in adversity, and he had not learnt it in vain. *Worth is better than wealth, goodness greater than distinction.* And, after that long pause of thought, he rose, and putting on his hat again—for he had removed it, as if to cool his heated brow while the furnace of thought worked within—he went to the door, and demanded, “Has the King been proclaimed in the village?”

“No, my lord,” replied the man; “you gave no orders.”

“Quick, order up my horse,” replied the young nobleman, “and bid the trumpeters mount. Shame on me that I neglected it for a minute!”

Then descending to the door, where a number of the soldiers were waiting his pleasure, he gave various orders for marching off the prisoners who had been taken in the town, and for communicating intelligence of all that had occurred both to Colonel Ingoldsby and to the Com-



mander-in-Chief. He then mounted his horse, and with a small party of troops following, and three trumpeters preceding him, he rode through the village, proclaiming the King at every open space. His last halt was before the castle, where the whole of the regiment which had accompanied him to Landleigh, drawn up in battle array, occupied the right-hand side of the green, while the villagers, in a considerable number, stood with every sign of rejoicing beneath the castle walls. A loud shout greeted his approach, and, in answer to the proclamation, a hundred voices shouted, "God save the King!"—a sound which had not been heard in Landleigh for many a year before. The young lord looked around over the faces of the country people, but he saw few that he recognised; for neither Alice Brownlow, nor her cousin, nor Jane, nor good Dame Unwin were present. In the front, indeed, was the thin spare person of Mr. Gideon Samson, and spurring his fiery horse up to him, the young nobleman shook him kindly by the hand, expressing regret that he had suffered imprisonment by the fanatics; adding, however, "As it was for conscience sake, my dear sir, you will not, I am sure, regret it."



Mr. Samson was about to reply, in perhaps a sourer strain than usual, when good Doctor Aldover stood forward, and with tears in his eyes greeted his former guest. "Ah! my dear young lord," he said, "I remember you now right well. How could I be so stupid as to forget you; though, lack-a-day! you are much changed—but so, indeed, am I. I trust, however, that you will be my guest again, and take up your quarters with me while you stay."

Denzil Norman was answering kindly, and bending from his horse, with Doctor Aldover's hand in his, to speak a few words more privately to his old friend, when an officer rode up, saying, "We have examined every nook and cranny, my lord, but we can find nothing."

"That is strange," answered the young nobleman. "My information is positive, but I shall probably receive further intelligence soon. Let the matter pass for the present, and be with me at eight to-night. In the meanwhile, dismiss the troops to their quarters, but see that good order be strictly preserved, and that the prisoners be well treated."

As he spoke, Denzil Norman dismounted from his horse, and, passing along the line, addressed



a few words to the soldiers, brief but kind and energetic; and when he had done, and seen them begin to file off, he turned again towards the villagers, looking apparently for Doctor Aldover. The worthy physician, however, had disappeared; and, telling the peasantry that if they would meet him there on the following day at twelve, he would treat them to as much beef and ale as they could lay into their skins in honour of the King's restoration, Denzil walked slowly into the castle court, and gazed around him for a moment or two with an air in some degree melancholy.

Some of the villagers, before they departed, peeped in through the archway, to see what the young commander was about; but one by one they dropped away, some of them saying to each other as they went, "He is waiting to see the fairy, I will warrant."

In the meantime, Denzil Norman took out his watch, and communed with himself in a low murmur. "I should like to see," he said, with a slight smile, perhaps at his own credulity, "I should like to see whether this sight will appear again. It wants but half an hour to sunset. I will wait and watch, and go down to the cottage after night-fall. It is growing very sultry, me-



thinks," and, passing through the arch again, he looked forth over the sky. To the southward and eastward heavy clouds were rising up, and advancing with great rapidity, although, as he stood there beneath the ruined walls, not a breath of air fanned his cheek; and, walking round to the further side of the building, he gazed out over the scene below, seeing the dark shadows sweeping up over the sunshiny lands, while a long black fringe, stretching from the edge of the cloud to the very ground, told that the rain was descending in torrents not far off. A dull flash passed before his eyes as he gazed, and turning back towards the gates of the castle, he placed himself under the heavy arch, and gazed towards the well. The sunshine, which, streaming through the portal, stretched out across the green grass of the court, growing longer and longer as the sun declined, had just reached the margin of the well, and the deep clouds, stretching far over the sky, seemed to gather the whole light under their gloomy canopy. The rays, changing from the warm yellow, first assumed a violet colour, and then a rosy red, so that some fragments of glass in the old window frames seemed actually



to send forth flames. More than one flash had succeeded the first which Denzil Norman had seen, and one loud roll of the thunder had been heard, when suddenly a broad blue glare spread over the sky, and a thin line of zigzag light darted rapidly down before his eyes, and struck a pinnacle of the old keep which towered up on the right-hand side. In an instant, a large mass of the stonework was cast down, joining the crashing noise of its fall with the deafening roar of the thunder. Denzil Norman pressed his hands over his eyes, for the brightness of the flash seemed almost to have deprived him of sight. When he opened them again, and looked towards the well, the same figure he had seen before was standing there, but now a portion of the white garments was cast over the head, and the face was entirely veiled. The young gentleman sprang forward, but while he was yet some fifteen or twenty paces from the well, the figure, which had been perfectly motionless before, raised one arm with a warning motion, and a voice said, "Hold ! no farther !"

"Tell me, then, extraordinary being, what you are !" exclaimed Denzil Norman, pausing in his advance.



“That matters not to you,” she said. “Inquire not of things that concern you not, but listen to words that may benefit you. You have followed counsel, and you have prospered. Follow it now, and you shall have better than prosperity—peace! All shall undergo a change in this land. The old things have passed away; the new are coming. You stand upon the limits of two great epochs, with an impassable gulf between them. Men shall try to bring back that which has gone by, and they shall fail. Strife and bloodshed will follow, and corruption and wickedness shall reign; but do you mix in none of these things. Flee the court and the cities, and live amongst your own people on your own lands. Be a brother to some, a father to others, a friend to all, and suffer not yourself to be tempted into places where kings resort; for in this day of all days it is dangerous, if not wicked. Hold yourself aloof from every faction and every party; and let the gay and the light scoff if they will, the sober and the steadfast will love and approve. This I am commanded to tell you: will you obey as you before obeyed? If you do, you shall be rewarded.”

“Most assuredly I will,” replied Denzil Nor



man; "for, in truth, such was my determination ere you spoke. Now one word more—"

"Enough!" said the figure, waving its hand, "enough! You shall find him you seek before this night be over."

She took a step back as she spoke, and, as she did so, another vivid flash of lightning blazed through the castle court. He could see the livid fire play around the form before him, and, at the same moment, a loud crash was heard mingling with the thunder, and one of the large elms, shivered by the lightning, fell in a slanting direction across the well, brushing the garments of the young Cavalier even as he started away.

"It must have fallen upon her," he exclaimed, and, advancing rapidly, he looked round in every direction. But the figure was no longer to be seen, and the next instant the sun went down, the dark clouds stretched over the sky, and all was darkness.

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## CHAPTER XII.

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THROUGH the thick shower of rain, with drenched garments and a somewhat disappointed



heart, Denzil Norman took his way back from the cottage of John Brownlow towards the house of good Doctor Aldover. He had found no one at the cottage but the servant girl, and an old woman appointed to watch the body of the dead man. Neither could he obtain any information regarding Alice at all satisfactory to himself. The girl said she had not been at home for three days, and that she did not know where she was; but that was all the young nobleman could extract from her; and let those who are younger than I am imagine the disappointment which such tidings gave to one who, for months, had been dwelling in the thought of seeing her whom he loved, and calling her his own. The warm reception of good Doctor Aldover cheered him, it is true: and he was still more cheered by the worthy man's assurances that Alice Brownlow would soon be back again, and that she had only left the place from fear of the Roundhead soldiery—a term which the Doctor did not scruple to use in the present instance, although he would rather have eaten his hand than have applied it to the soldiers of the Commonwealth a month before.

As soon as he had given this intelligence, how-



ever, Doctor Aldover thought fit to put on a grave look, and add, "I am not sure, my good lord, that I ought not to send word to Alice that she had better remain away, for I do not half like a noble lord taking such particular interest in a cottage girl."

"If you do, I shall not easily forgive you," answered Denzil Norman; "but be under no fear, my good Doctor. I can act as a man of honour to a woman as well as to a man. I will now send for my luggage, and change my dress, for I am somewhat travel-stained and very wet."

"You will find all your luggage in your room, my lord," replied Doctor Aldover. "I took the liberty of telling your people that you should quarter nowhere else while you were at Landleigh. I will light you up, and when you have done we will have another bowl of punch together, and drink the King's health with a worthy friend of mine who is anxious to be well acquainted with you."

"What! Mr. Gideon Samson?" said the young nobleman.

"No, no," replied the Doctor, "one of a very different kidney: but this is the way;" and



he led his guest up the low open staircase to the room he had tenanted before. Some time elapsed before Denzil came down again, for, to say the truth, he passed several minutes in meditation. At length, however, he descended, and found his way easily enough to the good Doctor's library, guided partly by memory, partly by the sound of voices speaking. On opening the door, he beheld two persons seated by the small square table in the window. Doctor Aldover was one, the other was a noble-looking man in black, with a pointed beard, which, as well as his hair, was nearly white ; and yet, to judge both from form and face, he was by no means far advanced in life. He had a long rapier by his side, and his black cloak had not been cast off. The moment the young nobleman entered, he rose and gazed upon him steadfastly, while Denzil's eyes were busy with his features also. The next instant, however, Lord Blount started forward with extended hand, exclaiming, " Oh, my dear lord ! this is indeed a joyful meeting. Where have you concealed yourself from me ? "

" Welcome, welcome, Denzil," said Lord Eustace ; " welcome, my dear boy. Well have you done your *devoir* as a loyal subject, a good



soldier, and an honest man. What more need I to reward me for all the care I bestowed upon your youth?" and at the same moment he took Denzil's hand with his own left.

The young man looked somewhat surprised. "Nay, my good lord," he said; "give me your right hand surely, if you love me as of old."

"You will know the touch of it right well," said Lord Eustace, stretching his right arm from beneath the cloak, and grasping Denzil's hand.

The young nobleman started back, exclaiming, "Good heaven! What is this? It is cold as iron!"

"Because it is iron," answered Lord Eustace. "On the bitterest day of all my life, Denzil, wounded in the right arm, and a prisoner on the field of battle, my escape was purchased at the dearest price that ever was paid for human safety—at a price which I call honour to witness I would not willingly have paid for a thousand years of the brightest existence that ever was given to mortal man. Untended for many days, the gangrene seized upon my wounded hand, and I lost it under the surgeon's knife. Thanks to this good old man, whom



you must remember well as my chaplain when you were a boy, this contrivance was procured for me, on a model brought from far, serving me wellnigh as well as the hand I had lost; for by the movement of my arm, I can clasp and extend the fingers as you see, ay, wield a sword or strike a stout blow, should it be needful. I have struck one, too, and not long since."

"Yes, I have heard of it," replied Denzil. "Had it not been for that, I might have come somewhat too late."

"And for a dose of Thebaic tincture," added Doctor Aldover. "I had better intelligence than Master Okey thought for; and when he sent for me, after I had been kept many hours in prison in sore trepidation of mind and discomfort of body, I made bold to give him that which I knew would render the snake innocuous for eight or ten hours at least; but now, by the leave of both your lordships, I will retire and prepare a better potion than that which I gave the Roundhead colonel—good punch, I mean. Perhaps, too, you may have matters well to be talked over in private."

Thus saying, he withdrew; and a long, a sad,



and interesting conversation took place between the elder and younger noblemen, in which Denzil for the first time learned the events which had taken place on Worcester field an hour or two after night-fall; how a wife and a daughter had devoted themselves to save a husband and father; and how the shot which had been intended for the escaped captive had struck her whose life was far dearer to him than his own, as has been shadowed out in the first chapter of this history.

“For years,” continued Lord Eustace, “I have mourned as few men ever mourned. In secrecy and by night I caused the body of my departed saint to be brought hither to my old castle of Landleigh, where the reverend friend who has just left us performed the last office for the dead in the vaults beneath the castle. Every morning have I prayed beside her tomb, every evening have I wept over her, and strewed the cold stone with flowers. I have lived the life of a hermit within those old walls, concealed and aided by a few kind friends and faithful dependents, who befriended me in my adversity as I had befriended them in my prosperity. The most skilful and the most kind, because by na-



ture the most timid, was good Doctor Aldover ; and an idle story which spread amongst the villagers of the castle being haunted by a fairy contributed much to my long concealment."

"Nay, my good lord," replied Denzil, "it was no idle story got up by villagers. The fairy I have seen with my own eyes, and a right beautiful fairy she is. On the very same night when I saw your lordship in the vaults beneath the castle, I beheld that fairy, and you must have beheld her too."

He spoke with a smile, but Lord Eustace answered gravely. "I saw no fairy, Denzil. You must have been dreaming."

"Not so, upon my life," replied Denzil Norman. "I was called thither to that interview by the fairy's voice. I saw her with my own eyes that night ; and I have seen her twice since, ay, this very night, not much more than an hour ago. But, perhaps, my dear lord, the fairy was of flesh and blood. Had I not known that your dear daughter was in London, kept by the Lady Mary Falconbridge, under the tutelage of Cromwell, I should have thought it was her whom I beheld."

Lord Eustace smiled with an incredulous



shake of the head. “Well, Denzil,” he said, “young men and young women are hard to disabuse of their errors ; but as you have mentioned my daughter’s name, let me speak at once, before Aldover’s return, on a subject near to my heart. You are well aware, I doubt not, it was the dearest wish of my beloved Lilla that our Kate should be united to you, whom we had educated with so much care. The dear girl will soon be in my arms again. I find that her education has been in no degree neglected ; and as Cromwell, with a generosity but little to be expected, saved my lands from confiscation for her sake, saying that he would not spoil the orphan—he believing me to be dead—the wealth, which was abundant in other days, has only increased. Beautiful she is, Denzil, beautiful she must be ; and with a right good will, a father’s blessing, and a dowry which might suit a princess, I will give her to you as soon as we reach London. But you look grave, good youth. What is the matter ? Does not the match suit you ?”

Denzil Norman paused for a moment ere he replied, and he felt his situation painful. For the man before him he entertained, as well he



might, a son's affection. Lord Eustace had been to him a father when his own father was no more. Lady Eustace had been more than a mother to him. For the sweet child, who, with such fortitude and presence of mind, had saved her father from imprisonment and death, he had felt in early years a brother's affection. But yet there was something stronger still than all this to be set against it : there was love, the pure, high, first love of a warm and enthusiastic heart. That would have been enough ; but there was something more. There was honour—that feeling, that principle, that prejudice, call it what you will, which had been early implanted in his heart by the man who now spoke to him, which had been cherished through life, and worshipped almost with idolatry. He had spoken words to Alice Brownlow which could never be unsaid, which he could not, which he would not, wish unsaid. What were to him the prejudices of the world, what the considerations of wealth, of rank, of station, in comparison with honour and love ! He knew that the light and gay might laugh ; he knew that the proud and the selfish might scorn and blame ; but he was not the creature of other men's opinions, and he hesitated



not a moment. He paused, indeed, but it was with no hesitation. It was merely to consider how he might tell his tale so as not to pain or offend the hearer.

“What is the matter, Denzil?” demanded Lord Eustace, after waiting some moments for an answer; and his brow was grave and almost stern as he put the question.

“I will tell you in few words, my dear lord,” replied the young nobleman; “and you shall judge, and will judge, as you always do, nobly and rightly. It was my fate some time ago to meet in this very village, in a humble station of life, without fortune, without family, without anything to recommend her but the loveliness of her person, and the high qualities of her mind, the only woman for whom I ever felt love. In a moment of danger and difficulty, when I little thought to see the bright days that we now see, when I little thought to meet you or any of my old friends again, I told her of my love and won a promise from her. Yet I will own, had I known all that I now know—had I been a prophet to foresee the events which have taken place, I would have done the same.”

“Have you considered well, young man,” said



Lord Eustace, with a very grave brow, "that which you are about? Have you bethought you of all that must follow? Remember that the beauty must fade, and all those charms and graces which captivate the eye will pass away; that passion itself may die in its own flame, and the more solid realities of the world may acquire weight even with a romantic spirit, as the hurry of the young blood is calmed by years, and thought takes place of passion. Have you remembered what it will be to see the cold civility shown by your peers to the young Lord Blount's peasant wife? to hear it told how you had been caught by a pretty face? to bear all those petty slights and half-concealed contempts which follow surely in society upon an ill-assorted union?"

"My lord, I have thought of all this and more," replied Denzil. "I have put more questions to my own heart than you can or will put; and I have answered, that beautiful as she is, were it mere beauty, I should never have spoken to her the words I have spoken; but even had I done so for beauty alone, yet I would keep my word. I owe that to her and to myself. In doing so, however, I have no fears, no hesitation either for myself or her; for the mind is



lovely as the person, and the heart as beautiful as either. You smile, my dear lord."

"Because you speak as a lover, and will act as a lover," answered Lord Eustace. "May your love long continue; for in it only can you find happiness under such circumstances. But, good faith, I should like to see your paragon of perfection. You say that she lives in this village; I must surely know her. What is her name?"

The colour somewhat mounted in the young lord's cheek as he replied, "Alice Brownlow;" but Lord Eustace shook his head. "I know no such person here," he said. "There was old Roger Brownlow, a tenant of mine, who has since proved traitor to his lord I find, and John Brownlow, his son, as good a youth as ever lived, who has served me well; but the old man had no daughter."

"He had a niece, though," answered Denzil.

"I never met with her," replied Lord Eustace. "I must ask good Doctor Aldover about her; for I must see her, in good faith, Denzil; and if she proves as you have reported her, you shall have my blessing on your marriage as a father's. Ah! here comes the good Doctor himself. Tell me,



my old and valued friend, who is this Alice Brownlow that my young friend Denzil raves about."

"She is all that is beautiful, bright, and excellent," replied Doctor Aldover; "and is in my house at this very moment."

"What, you too enthusiastic!" cried Lord Eustace. "Pray, let me have the fair lady's company, my dear friend. Nay, I will go and fetch her myself. Where shall I find her?"

"Not so, I will bring her," answered Doctor Aldover; and, going forth again, he returned a moment after, leading Alice by the hand. She was dressed as she had been when she went with Denzil to the church, with wimple and hood, almost like a nun; and, with a heart beating warmly, he sprang up to meet her so soon as that beautiful form appeared; but, without even looking towards him, Alice drew her hand from that of Doctor Aldover, and advanced with a quick and eager step towards Lord Eustace.

The old nobleman threw wide his arms, and, casting hers around his neck, she leaned her head upon his bosom, and sobbed aloud.

"Nay, Kate, nay," cried Lord Eustace; "nay, my sweet Kate, be not so moved. What though



this ungrateful boy here refuses your hand, all for the love of one Alice Brownlow, we shall find you a better husband, no fear. Come, look up, my Kate. Well I know joy will have tears as well as sorrow, and we have shed many of the former together, so the latter must have way. Keep back, Lord Blount, you have refused her, you know. Lo! you repent, do you? Well, take her, then, and forget Alice Brownlow in the arms of Catherine Brooke."

"Never," answered Denzil, throwing his arms around her, "never, my good lord. My first love, and my last : call her what name you will—add titles, rank, distinction, fortune, everything that men hold dear, you cannot make me love her better than I loved my cottage girl."

"Thanks, Denzil, thanks for that," cried Alice, for so we must still call her, as he ever did. "But will you love me as well, Denzil, as Catherine Brooke, for, look, I am very much changed," and she threw back the hood from her head. Somewhat to his surprise, he then beheld that the dark black braided hair was gone, and in its place the bright glossy tresses of a warm light brown, which he remembered hanging over the fair brow of the child. He only drew her closer



to his breast. “Ay,” he said, “as Alice Brownlow, as Catherine Brooke, and moreover as—”

But she put her fair hand upon his lips, saying, “Hush, hush ! not a word of that ;” and she turned a timid glance to good Doctor Aldover, whose eyes were too full of joyful tears to notice one-half of all that passed.

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### L'ENVOYE.

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DEARLY beloved reader, you have heard an old story as it was told by an old man upon an old Christmas night. For some reason of his own—you know old men are very whimsical—he did not choose to go any farther, and it was quite in vain to question him. Perhaps the truth was he knew nothing more, for he was a man of scrupulous veracity, as I am. I would have been glad to hear the details ; but nevertheless I contented myself with what I had got—an exceedingly good plan in all circumstances, dear reader, but for which, on this occasion, I had my particular reasons. In the first place, I could not at all doubt that, under the circumstances in which they married, Denzil Norman and the Lady Catherine Brooke, otherwise Alice Brown-



low, were as happy as any two people can be in this place of pilgrimage. I was satisfied therefore in regard to them, and wished them joy as heartily as good Doctor Aldover did, I do not doubt, after giving them the nuptial benediction when he was restored to his old cure at Landleigh—which I find by the parish register was in July of the year 1660. As to John Brownlow, who by the way was Alice's foster-brother, I have not the slightest doubt in the world that he married Jane Unwin, and made her a very excellent husband.

It is not a thing to be doubted at all; and I find in the records of the house of Fauconberg the following curious passage :—

“Alice Brownlow, long educated by my Lady Mary as the Lady Catherine Brooke, she having been found in a house at Worcester after the battle at that place, and passed by her mother Janet for the daughter of Lord Eustace, was this day dismissed to her home with many presents, she having grown greatly in my lady's favour, by reason of her gentleness and docility. Item, a silver salt-cellar was given to her by my lord as a gift.”

In regard to Mr. Gideon Samson, I might have



made my mind uneasy, having no precise information concerning him, but that I find many of the Presbyterian clergy fled from England into Scotland, to avoid the plague and Episcopacy; and as Sir Walter Scott, in one of his true histories, records the life and actions of a worthy gentleman of the same surname as our respected friend, I have no doubt that he left posterity to carry on his virtues to other generations.

The only persons of importance to be provided for, therefore, were the old castle and the fairy. As to the old castle, its ruins were shown with pride within my remembrance, by the antiquaries of Landleigh, who pointed out to the curious a subterranean communication between the building and the church, together with some stone doors in the remaining towers of the old fortalice, fitting so nicely into the masonry as not to be distinguishable to any but a prepared eye. The building has lately been very much dilapidated by a greediness for stones which has come upon the population since numerous factories have been established by the banks of the stream; and some of the wags of the place have remarked, that the castle is the best quarry in the neighbourhood.



Either from this desecration of her dwelling-place, or some other cause of disgust, the fairy as not appeared for many, many years by the side of Landleigh well, though its waters remain clear and limpid, and the setting sun shines upon it every evening as before, throwing by his beams, reflected from its bright surface at that particular moment, a strange lustre upon any figure standing behind the fountain. Her memory is still cherished, however, by the older and the younger inhabitants of the place. The boys and girls look through the old archway with timid expectation as they pass on the summer evenings; and I once gave great offence to an old lady by hinting a suspicion that the famous fairy of Landleigh well was no other than the beautiful daughter of Brooke, Lord Eustace.

On this important point I must leave all readers to judge for themselves; but, at all events, this was the last of the fairies, and the only one that ever appeared after William Churne of Staffordshire was dead, and “Wittie Bishop Corbet” took his “Farewell” of the Good People.



















ET DUCRO.















































James, G. P. R.,

The last of the fairies

Paris 1848

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